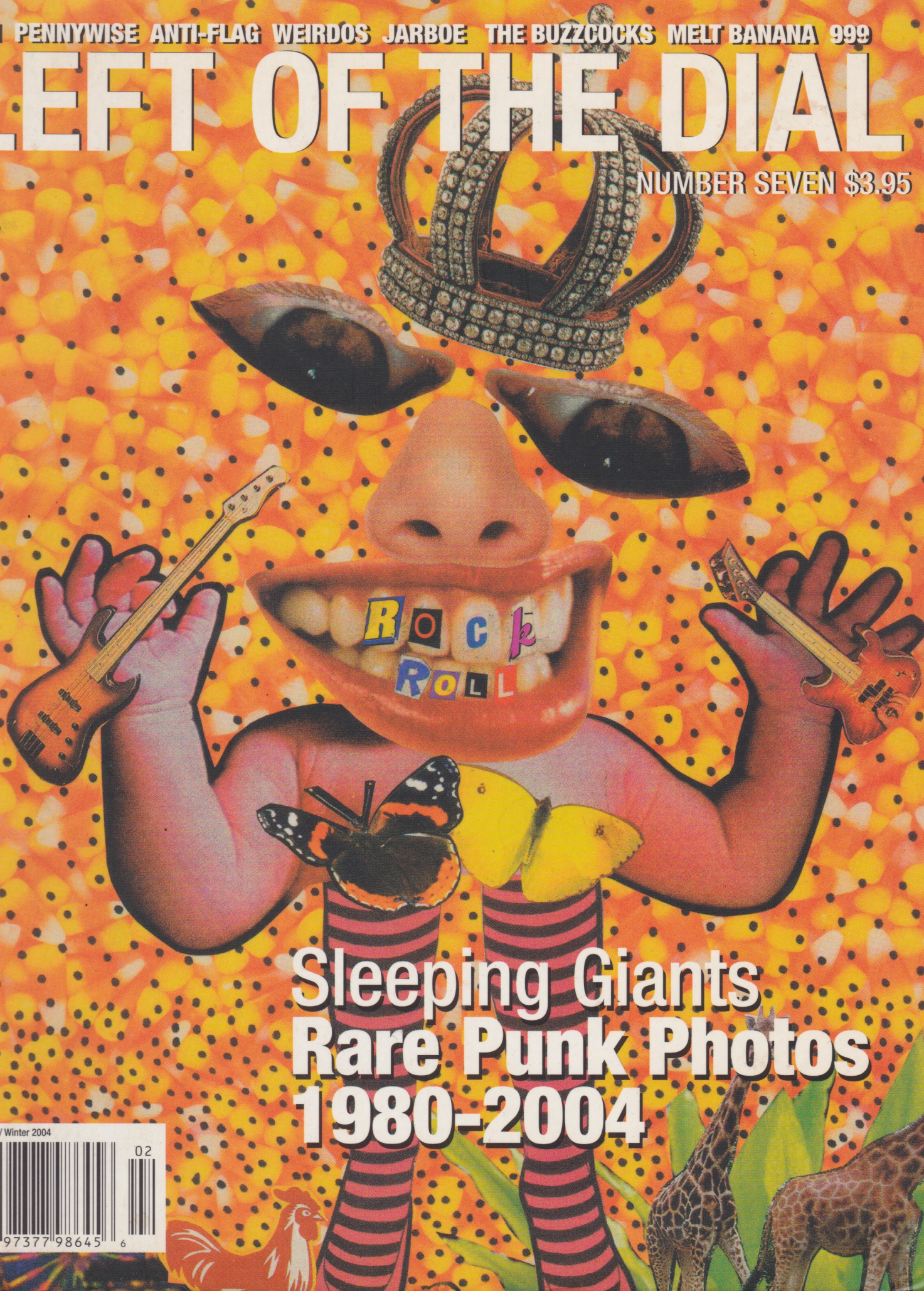


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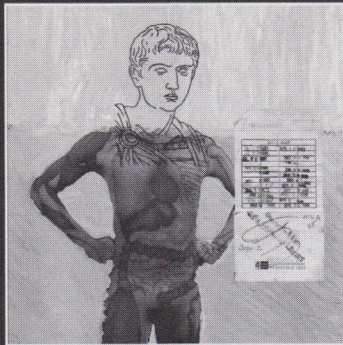
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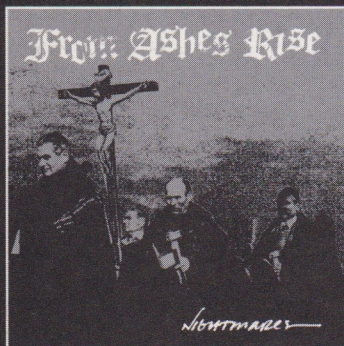
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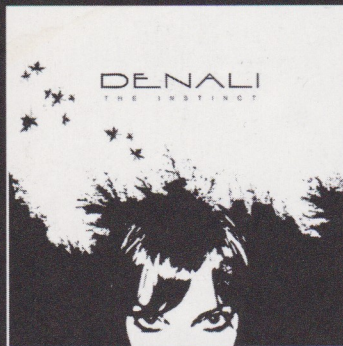
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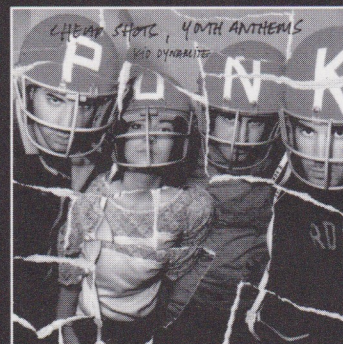


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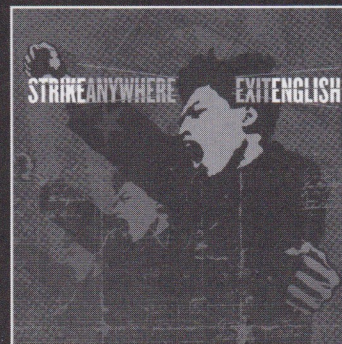
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Editor's Intro

With the deeds of war still rumbling and tumbling, first with a bursting "shock and awe" blitzkrieg beginning, now with an unforeseeable teetering-on-the-edge-of-disaster end, and the world drowning in blip, blip, blip one-liner CNN broadcasts while radio licensing and ownership, serpentine tax codes, and ever-embattled abortion rights are being fought over as if every last microbe of our bodies were being thrust into a gladiator-style spectator sport, most of America sits back and yawns, scratching their tummies. Pass the beer and peanuts, damnit. They are content to shadowbox, stay glued to a host of electronic devices, or count the hairs on their thumbs.

The once ill-tempered and unruly market is up. The Democrats are sawing up chunks of votes in Iowa and trying to be the Presidential Pied Piper. Saddam was captured looking like Hot Water Music on a bad day on tour in Wichita in 1998. And LOTD, to borrow the title from Aimee Cooper's biography, still thinks that it's "coloring outside the lines." It doesn't come out on time, it isn't dictionary-thick with ads, and it doesn't even attempt to be a real magazine by tossing reviews and opinions to the gators in the industry. Does this make it better? Nope. Does it make it sane and profitable? Nope. Does it make it honest? I hope.

The year behind us has rolled up its sleeves and left the furrowed fields behind. Though such heavy weights as Johnny Cash have disappeared into the blare of Gabriel's trumpet, and quirky mind-benders like Wesley Willis took a battered one-way Amtrak to the other side of heaven, where he can "rock on" with Liz Phair and Chicago forever, the rest of us watch Jack White in Cold Mountain and wonder why it took Hollywood so long to grab his doll eyes and dress him up as a wandering unkempt minstrel. The rest of us await the next big thing, the music that will make new odors and twist and tie together awesome neuron sculptures behind our skin. Then again, LOTD has never really been on the cusp, since we often nod and wink at the past, the old roads and saviors, so I'm not sure if we can help you navigate the terrain of the fetishized "new" styles, but I hope we can imprint your conscience with some of the bands we feel have left footprints on our cerebrums. I don't aim to please, but I do aim to make a mark. This is basically our third year, and instead of trying to celebrate with barrels of foil and gargantuan banners strewn across cityscapes, I decided on a low level karate chop to the visual senses: a photo archive that might be relished from here to eternity, simply because no one will believe that some of these photos have quite literally (I say that with a phlegmy English accent) never been witnessed or pawed at outside a file cabinet or fanzine that probably numbered no more than a few hundred copies in the salad days of punk and hardcore. That's right.

Ben Desoto's work came to me via a bone-chilling storage space in the back of a makeshift artist studio in the former desultory factory district of downtown Houston. Piles of negatives simply stuffed into manilla folders, enough history to make any young man get on his knees and beg to see: Circle Jerks, Really Red, Black Flag, Minutemen, and the DKs. The whole meal deal sitting like piles of M&Ms, never really relished except in a gallery show or two. Long forgotten black and white embers. The Ark of Houston punk, now wide open for the first time.

Then there's Biscuit from the Big Boys, who dug underneath his bed, rifled through piles of what seemed to be pop culture debris, revealing a significant chronicle of a man who has taken the concept of outsider art to a blissful conclusion, making his yard into a living museum, his shelves into an eBay zone just waiting to happen, his walls the living proof and fabric of his existence, tangled with so much Day-Glo assemblage art that any leftover geek from Warhol's camp and Thrasher days would pitch a tent and never move out.

But we mustn't forget Dixon Colbourn, who now works in the impregnable offices at the University of Texas, but has never tossed aside his past as editor and creator of *Idle Time*, the punk zenith of Austin fanzines, replete with a cache of photos that lie unnoticed on web space, languishing like jewels whose mystery only intensifies after years and years of half-neglected memory, now finally thrown up to you, the masses, with hungry eyes, making the invisible visible again.

Yet, we at LOTD are not knee-deep in the past only, for the LOTD archive and the work of Caleb Brown, one our newbies, rings with a resonance that makes sense of how the new fits in with the contours of the old, not to mention giving some elbow room to those band members who were barely five years old during Black Flag's last tour. The circle is complete, well, for about two minutes while you flip through these nervous pages. These new photos may not be rolled up in the muck of memory, but they do let you touch the skin of LOTD as it brandishes basic good taste! Also, you begin to realize that LOTD is a music magazine, dedicated to all things righteous and beatific, not just clambering in the hallways of buzzed-hair punk.

Over the last few years, we have only really scratched and dented and poked at the surface of what I want to do in terms of making music as important as architecture and DNA, the things that literally hold up our bodies. Though some people have never been able to really understand my assertion of loose-knit principles, or my desire to be the one magazine that does not tow the typical lines that lead to more senseless consumption and lack of sincerity, I do feel that I have wired together a kind of community that can rely on one thing: Music is not just some novel experience, chitchat set to beats, but the temperature of our bodies in space and motion. It's a good virus, a kind of ethics that replaces the old modes, the familiar made unfamiliar, and vice versa, the density and weight of happiness and sadness combined, and primary colors broken down and rearranged by nu sensorium. We have just begun to gather steam, and I know I have disappointed people along the way, in one form or another. By being scatterbrained. Over ambitious. Forgetful. Vengeful. Demanding. Calculating. Disorganized. All the contradictions rolled up into one messy guacamole of the soul. But touch this mag, and you touch a person—the thought-lines, patterns, beliefs, and torch of desire. Vapor and plasm shift under your fingers. The text becomes both wolf and wondering scholar. The Herodotus of rock 'n' roll has now entered the field. He is you. He is she. LOTD is the transmitter, the wagon, the antennae, the frequency, and the diary. You have become the shatterer of myth and dumsaint of the dawn.

We welcome you.

Pennywise

Balazs Sarkadi talked to guitarist Fletcher at the Two Days a Week Festival in Wiesen, Austria.

Bush from power. Do you think it's a good idea to get involved with party politics this much?

I think it's totally important for the people to get politically involved, but I don't like the Democrats, either. I like the idea of democracy, but America is not a democracy, it's a lie. We didn't get to vote whether we want the war or

On the new album you continue the political rage of *Land of the Free*. "God Save the USA" is a fierce attack on the Bush administration. Fat Mike's punkvoter.com chose to campaign for the Democrat candidate, Howard Dean, to oust

not. Clinton dropped 450 bombs on Iraq in one night when he was in office. Nobody was really mad about it. I think it's really important for the youth to become involved in politics, and I think the Green Party is where it needs to go. The Democrats say if you vote for the Green Party, you throw away a vote. But the reality is pollution, the environment, war, military, all this stuff are the real problems of the world, and the only people talking about doing something about it are the Green Party. But people don't take Ralph Nader seriously. They say he's a dumb hippy. Well, when the ice caps melt in the Arctic, and the levels come up, and there's no more Amsterdam, Los Angeles or New York, then people will



be shouting, "Green Party, help us please!" or when North Korea starts firing nuclear weapons, and we bomb them. We're headed into big trouble. We need a whole new idea how the planet should be run like. It's not just America, because other countries are fucked up too, like Germany or Russia, who sold military equipment to Saddam Hussein. In a situation with a crazy person like Saddam Hussein, that's when the UN comes together. The fucking UN doesn't do shit. All they do is sit around and talk. I agree that there were a lot of reasons to go to Saddam Hussein and try to take him out, but there were a lot of reasons not to go to war, because we have a whole new population of Iraqis now that hate America, because their mum and dad died in the war. If the UN was doing their job properly, they would have told Saddam, "The whole fucking world wants you to be gone, could you just fucking leave?" and there would have been no bloodshed. The UN didn't do anything when a million people were slaughtered in Rwanda. They watched it happen. And it's always America that's trying to come to the rescue and Americans are becoming the bad guys.

Speaking of punk and politics, Jack Grisham is running for California Governor as an independent candidate. What do you think about it?

There you go, that's what I think (shows the TSOL tattoo on his wrist). I would vote for him first, since when I was a kid, he was my governor. I think Jack Grisham is a really smart guy, and California needs someone like him, who knows the pain of not being able to have health insurance, or not being able to pay the rent.

You come from Hermosa Beach, like Black Flag, the Descendents, and the Circle Jerks. Is it true you went to the same high school with these guys? And was it the experience that changed your life?

When I finally heard punk music for the first time, I knew that was what I wanted for my whole life. I never liked Led Zeppelin, or Kiss, but when I heard these bands, it connected. Going to school with the Descendents, who are about 3-4 years older than us, was definitely a huge influence. There were only about 20 punk rockers in the whole school.

Jim left the band right after the first album, and then a year later he returned. What was the reason for this hiatus?

The shows were really violent, and there was a lot of gang fighting. There were like 25 fights a night, people getting stabbed, and Jim wasn't into that. The same time we were going on the first European tour, he was getting married, and he was gonna have to quit his job to be able to go on tour, and he didn't want to risk it, so we were like, OK, we will go on tour without you, then we came back, started recording Unknown Road with Jason, the bass player singing, but I thought it isn't Pennywise any more without Jim in the band, so I called him up and said, hey, you know what, we are recording a new album, and we need you. And he came back. So he made the vocals for Unknown Road, quit his job, and we started touring. It was a difficult decision for him, but it was one of the chances you have to take.

I heard you recently got hit in the head with a bottle.

Yeah, it was pretty fucked up. I'm still dizzy.

Frank from the Voodoo Glow Skulls said it changed you. You calmed down.

I don't know about that. Maybe, a little bit. It was my friend that hit me though. I was putting some barbecue sauce in his eyes.

I heard you refused major deals at the time when Offspring got really big.

We refused major deals for a long time. We never even had a meeting with them. They wanted to take us out to dinner, like a lobster dinner, and I said, "I'll buy my lobster dinner, and I don't want to listen to your bullshit." You know what they're gonna tell you, they are gonna give you a million dollars. Then you sign to them, and then they say, you're gonna record in this studio with this producer, and it's gonna cost you \$600,000 out of the million. And the next is a video for \$500,000, so they spend all the money, and when you ask, "When do I get a paycheck?" then they say, "When you sell 3 million records." And if you only sell 500,000, then you are in trouble.

For how long have you been doing the band full time?

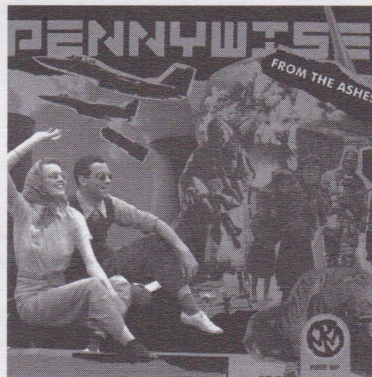
About eight years. When Pennywise started, everyone was working construction and other jobs to support themselves, and then slowly you get a paycheck, 500 bucks, 200 bucks, 1,000 bucks. I know everything about construction, electricity, and tile. I could build a whole house. I still do it. I built a house about a year ago for a friend.

Is your current job the best that you ever wanted?

Probably not. It's a really good job, but I'd rather be a doctor, or have a job that is more focused on helping people. I think we're helping a lot of people with our lyrics, and opening up eyes, so right now this may be the best job, but later on I'd like to help small children that don't have anything in their lives. Teaching would be good too, but the parents would fucking hate me. They would throw me out because I would tell the truth. I would tell the kids how it is. I'd be saying "fuck" all the time. Teachers got the most important jobs in America and they make \$35,000 in a year, which is enough for eating pizzas at Domino's. So they don't give a fuck about the kids, because they don't make any money. I had three teachers in my life that were really important, cause they had an impact on me.

I heard you have plans about starting a label . . .

Yes, but it would be based on a different approach than most labels. Today the bands are spoiled. The labels give the bands money for a van, for equipment, and when they don't sell enough records, they tell the band to fuck off. The working ethic of old bands like Black Flag, Minor Threat or Pennywise was buy your own fucking equipment. Get a job at a construction, save up the money, buy your own amplifier, make your own parties and scene, and be independent. We have a recording studio, and we



There was a story about you and the guy from Zeke involving a knife. . . .

Epitaph made a story look like Zeke was this big punk rock band. He said some shit to me in the dressing room. He didn't know who I was. He said something like, "Get me a beer, fat boy." Well, you can call me fat boy if you are my friend, but I just told him, "Watch how you are talking to people, cuz someone may just kick you in the mouth." He goes, "Oh yeah?" and pulled out a knife, trying to look like a tough guy. I said, "OK, I'm gonna count to three, and take up this chair, and I'm gonna hit you in the head with it, tak. . . the knife away and cut your throat. One, two. " He put the knife away.

would donate our time for the band, and if they make any money, we'll share the profit.

And how's about Vans Records, where Jim was the president?

That's already gone. Jim quit, because he had to answer to those lawyers at the corporation, and they didn't want to do anything, so he said fuck you. I knew that was coming. If you want to start a label, you have to start it by yourself, by your own rules.

I Am the Hunted Colin from GBH

You told an interview that "it would be better if everyone concentrated on the music and gigs rather than image and politics." Yet wasn't the image of GBH something you wanted to take at least somewhat seriously (I mean, like most punks you didn't want to look like Iron Maiden or Fleetwood Mac!), and the band definitely had a political edge, so what exactly do you mean by your statement?

Some of the quotes are not mine personally... but here goes: The music is much more important than image to us, our politics are definitely left of center, but it has always been "personal politics." We didn't want to be another Crass, who were preaching to the converted, really. We've never taken ourselves all that seriously, so there is a fun aspect, as well. We just wanted to make good music and have a laugh doing it.

Whether creating a working relationship with bands like Agnostic Front early on, or with Billyclub a few years ago, GBH always seemed to have close ties to American bands, whereas a lot of English bands tended to distance themselves. Why/how has GBH maintained such close ties? We just clicked with Americans from the first time we went over in '83. I don't know why, but it just happened. To simplify it, I think they liked our wide-eyed innocence (well, we were at the time), because when we started, we never thought we would end up going to the U.S., seeing things we had only seen on TV and movies, etc. And we liked their naked enthusiasm for the music and the scene.

You began your interest in punk around the age of fifteen, but what exactly were you exposed to?

Little bits of information, hearing a song on the radio and seeing stuff on TV, and when I began to buy records, I would read every single word on the sleeve and even the things they used to scratch in the middle of the record. I guess all kids go through a rebellious stage, and we were in the right place at the right time.

You've said that punk rock continues to make you realize that "all you're told in school, on TV, in the newspapers is not always true." Do you think that punk rock is one way to maintain and promote the truth, and why is it more honest than other forms of music?

It's all about honesty, really, cuz if you try to fool people in punk rock, you end up totally exposed. Any form of music that is played not for commercial reasons, but for the love of the music, is like that.

While most hardcore bands in America during the early '80s labored in total obscurity, GBH actually "started to get coverage in mainstream music papers in the early 1980s and your records got into charts," which never happened to similar bands in America. In fact, Sounds gave City Baby... five stars and the record entered the Top 20, which is amazing, because Clay was a one-man label! Why do you think that for a brief time that hardcore and oi were able to reach such a mass audience?



Again, I think it was being in the right place at the right time. Clay records was a tiny little office in a tiny little town, with one man behind a tiny little desk. And with no airplay, apart from the odd song on John Peel's radio show, it was word of mouth. There was nothing else going on. The initial phase of punk had slowed down, New Romantics were starting up, and it wasn't dominated by London. It had filtered across the country, and again, it was honest. You didn't need to buy expensive clothes. It was quite D.I.Y. Anyone could do it.

The first record you recall buying was one by Sweet, yet you fronted one of the fastest bands during the 1980s. How exactly did you create such a sound in Birmingham? Were you listening to UK Subs "You Give me the Disease" or the first singles of Discharge? What led to the great speed breakthrough—Motorhead, The Damned's "Love Song"?

I was only eight years old when I bought that record! We played fast because it covered up any mistakes we were making and it just seemed natural for us. We listened to all sorts of bands, but it was the hard and fast ones we liked the best. When I heard Discharge on the radio, I remember thinking, "this isn't a million miles from what we're doing," and I supposed we identified with it.

Lester Bangs, who hung out with the Clash and actually liked the Exploited's first record, said that "this music is as comforting and predictable... and safe as heavy metal whence it really sprang." Do you think that hardcore was the product of heavy metal, or something else?

I think it has more to do with the blues, really or rock'n'roll, but then again, I suppose heavy metal is a product of them as well.

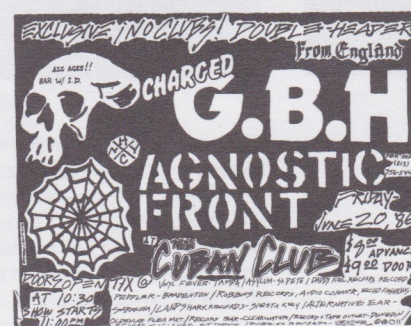
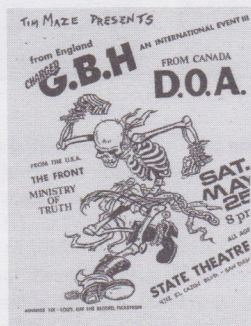
The reason I ask is because you vehemently deny that GBH "went metal," though it's obvious that Discharge did opt for the metal sound, but you, on the other hand, insist, "Some have been described (GBH's later records) as "metal," which is the biggest load of crap I've ever heard in my life. I hate heavy metal and everything it stands for... Does it even stand for anything? Heavy metal to me is Motley Crue, shit like that, but to some people's ears, our music sounds like it. Well, I just don't get it." How would you describe the band's matured sound?

We were (whether we liked it or not) improving as musicians and songwriters and were trying to test ourselves by writing stuff that was a challenge to play. I still (and always will) deny we went metal, and as you quoted, I hate metal and still do. If "hate" is too strong a word, I have no interest in it. All that screaming like a girl, it's just not my cup of tea, but if you are into it, good luck to you.

While bands like The Damned, Slaughter & The Dogs, the UK Subs, and others like GBH continue to tour and make good records, there really hasn't been a punk band in Britain in almost twenty years that has impacted the mainstream, unlike rather mediocre but hugely popular bands from the U.S. like Green Day, Blink 182, and Good Charlotte. Why did new punk music, except maybe for bands like Leatherface and Snuff, never really re-emerge as part of the mainstream in Britain?

Punk went seriously underground in the late '80s and is perfectly happy there, where no one can mess around with it. Also, I would say a lack of good venues and promoters is to blame. There are plenty of good bands about, but they will never have commercial success, because the music "biz" is very fickle.

You once wrote that "freedom of speech is about it as far as I am concerned" in terms of politics these day, but has the war in Iraq and



the Blair's "New Labor" policies changed that at all?

Well, that isn't one of my quotes, but the war against Iraq was wrong. Women and children getting killed is wrong, but also letting a murderous dictator rule through fear is wrong. Deep down I think Blair is a good human being, but all that gets compromised when you are a nation's leader. As for freedom of speech, should we give facists freedom of speech to preach hate? It's all very complicated, and I don't have any solutions.

It's obvious you do still care about issues, because you've also decried "The greedy Western World raping the planet. Rich pigs being paid too much for doing very little and the breakdown of families, this I speak from personal experience." What happened with your family, and did the early punk rock community provide a kind of shelter and alternative "family," and still maybe do the same?

Well, my mom died when I was 10, my dad re-married, and by the time I was 15 or 16, I just wanted to get out, so punk rock was an outlet for me. Don't get me wrong, I still love my family, but I wanted some personal freedom. As for all this globalization, I hate it. We are turning into a little America, McDonalds, Starbucks, etc. Why can't we all be original, *vive le difference*. And don't get me started on the euro, keep the pound, I say. Keep your own identity. It doesn't mean we can't all be friends

What do you like about the new crop of American punk bands like Anti-Flag, US Bombs, and New Bomb Turks, who you've named in the press before?

Well, I can't say I particularly like any of the bands you mention, but they are keeping the spirit going. Personally, I think Rancid are the best American band going, by a country mile.

"Catch 23" is ("about shithead businessmen who think that they can make money from you because you're young [well we were then], and naive. I hate them and I have seen lots of them come and go") the song you've said that best sums up the band's approach even today. For instance, you've told fans not to buy the Clay compilations because GBH had nothing to do with them, but how is Captain Oi, who has re-released your records, different than other labels?

Some of those Clay comps were released and re-released and we were not consulted about them. The same album but with a different name on the cover. I thought it was being dishonest to the kids who were buying it. At least Captain Oi asked me to write some sleeve notes and added extra tracks to them.

You and Ross "both played football for the same team when we were 10 or 11 years old. (Years later) we would drink in the only pub in Birmingham that would let punks in!" Is punk rock intimately tied to soccer in some ways, for instance, like Slaughter and the Dogs "Where Have All the Boot Boys Gone" about early 1970's Manchester United, or the new record by The Business, which has soccer as its only theme? I don't think football and punk rock should be related. Football hooligans are morons, and I don't want anything to do with them. I have a long memory, and it was these idiots who used to laugh at punks and start trouble, so I'm perfectly happy to leave them and their tiny brains to do

whatever it is they do, and they can leave us to our punk rock.

"Poor 'alternative' music, like punk bands who were too stoned to play fast. And all this 'I hate my parents' shit . . . very middle class America," is what you've called Nirvana, but what made early Midwest, middle-class punk bands—from Iggy and The Stooges to the Dead Boys—different in your eyes?

I was speaking generally about the whole grunge scene. I think Nirvana were a good band. It was all the copycat bands that tried to hitch a ride on their coattails I was on about, and I wouldn't say Iggy Pop was middle class; he used to live in a trailer park.

In terms of lyrics, you like "double meanings, and if I can get some cheesy rhymes in it too, all the better!" This, of course, brings up the apropos song title, "Womb with a View," which does those things. Who are some of your favorite lyricists and why?

I have loads of favourite lyricists. Anyone who can put into words what is in their heart, I like. Some are not very punk (so I won't mention them), but the Clash were very special, the way they wrote about things that actually happened to them. It has a kind of old-fashioned travelling minstrel thing going on. I love books and I love words and I love playing around with them. Just think—there are

only 26 letters to use, and you can use a zillion different combinations of them to say a zillion different things.

Even after dozens of tours, you seem to enjoy it: "Traveling between gigs we listen to music, watch movies, buy silly things from truck stops, sleep, smoke, drink . . . I'm a family man so I cannot divulge any naughty goings-on, but use your imagination . . . !" Do you think that if GBH stopped touring, the ability to have a career might sharply decline?

Well, for me it's all about doing live work. It has an instant reaction, good or bad, but it is a reaction, so giving up touring is not an option.

"The only person to ever give me a hard time about being a (now past) 40-year-old punk rocker is my wife!" Now that the whole first and second of generation of punk and hardcore fans have begun to reach middle-age, do you think they have shaped British culture in hidden ways?

It seems everywhere we go now people have tattoos, dyed hair, piercings, etc. When we first started, we were considered freaks. Now, it's accepted as the norm. There has been a lot of change, and I think the world is a better place. There is more communication, which helps.

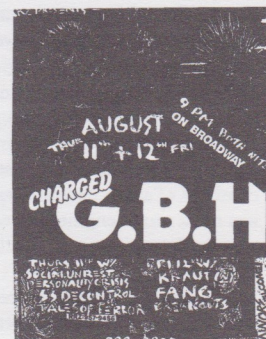
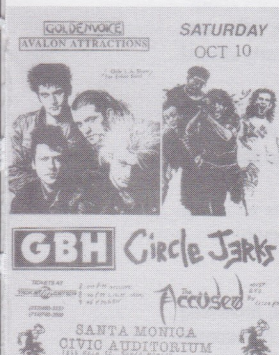
Lastly, some people might find your interest in gardening a surprise. Over the past twenty-five years, how have you surprised yourself?

I surprise myself nearly everyday. Becoming a father was pretty amazing and still is. I think you have to get on with things instead of complaining, us still being together, not that we don't get on, we do and hardly ever argue with each other. We have been on tours with other bands who hate each other and continually fight, and being on tour, when you are totally fucked, physically and emotionally, being able to get your mind in order and playing a great show . . . I think that has surprised us.



GBH flyer by Pushead

Yes, we know it's in here twice. Check out the crossover with 999 on p.51



This is Ozland, This is How I Feel

One Brief Chat with Rob Younger

Twice.

The Birdman shows in Europe and Australia have received very good press, but the New Christs are the ones that received Album of the Year in Big Takeover. Granted, playing with the Leaving Trains for two dates means a great deal to the select few who can see the shows, but why just tease America and not bring the New Christs over?

Well, the New Christs don't exist anymore and haven't for two years, so it's no tease. Anyway, I wouldn't tease America, for fear of its awesome capacity for retribution.

Actually, when Rob was working on the Deep Reduction tracks with Deniz, he told a reporter that the New Christs were a band that does not sell a lot of records. Sales are minimal and the name is unlikely to be used, and the band's market in Australia was almost nothing because of a lack of radio play outside of Melbourne. What changed to make the new record not only feasible, but excellent?

The new record was actually recorded a bit over two years ago, at which time the band disintegrated socially, and the U.S. label—Man's Ruin, ironically—intending to finance and release it, collapsed. So I said all that bleak stuff well after the fact, and in the knowledge that no one but a handful of people world-wide gave much of a fuck about us. The favorable reviews we received shocked me. I found it saddening that the band wasn't around to swing a European tour on the back of that response. See, the record was released a year ago in Australia, so there'd have been time to put something together.

Rob supposedly ad-libbed most of the vocals for the Deep Reduction sessions, even though he had been listening to the tapes for months prior to meeting up with Deniz.

I didn't ad-lib those vocals, I sang what was put in front of me, and for the three sets of words I wrote to cassettes sent to me, I wrote two versions, "plans A and B," not sure why, but in each case plan B prevailed. There wasn't time for more than two takes for any of them if I recall, a weird situation considering I was flown all that way to sing on the record. Whatever, it turned out well enough.

According to an Australian web site, the 1989 release of the New Race's First to Pay was hailed by some, since the original raw vocals are preserved and are considered by many to be compelling in their intensity. These had been overdubbed on the "official" First and Last album. The act was condemned by others, notably Rob Younger.

The simplest and best thing would be for the raw tapes to be mixed properly and put out. I thought the official release of "The First and the Last" was fine, and I only found out years later that Deniz has been unhappy with my re-recording of the singing. The two releases on Revenge were put out without my permission, Ron Asheton having presented them with utterly crap unmixed cassettes of various shows. These cassettes consisted of a one-pass-through "the-desk" mixes made by someone who was not a sound engineer, to enable the band members to figure out what was worth putting on an official release. Back then, I used to jump around so much that the vocals didn't always register on tape, and all I wanted to do was give the songs the necessary focus. Maybe they are better in organic form than what I changed them to. Who cares now anyway.

Rob told the English press, "It's cyclical how raw rock 'n' roll comes back to remind everybody and make them all ashamed about their wanking and over-production. Like the latest example, the White Stripes. . . I felt ashamed to be playing in a band with six people when two people can go out there and generate that shit." Does it fascinate him at all that the White Stripes are products of Detroit, the source of much of inspiration for Radio Birdman and the members of New Race?

Not really. It seems to be a coincidence, the Detroit connection. I was being tongue-in-cheek when I said I felt ashamed about having six as opposed to two, to emphasize the point about what a firm reminder the Stripes are that simplicity, directness, good songwriting and attitude don't require a traveling circus to support it, "that the power of ideas, of art, isn't, or shouldn't be, dependant on extravagance and over-embellishment. Sorry if that's badly explained. I suppose I should say that, for me, it wasn't just Detroit music that got me interested in playing music, apart from all the stuff I heard in my so-called formative years, it was the New York Dolls that got me to thinking I could give it a shot. I never felt I could get anywhere near to capturing the atmosphere I perceived on Funhouse.

In terms of the recent Long Way To the Top music series on ABC TV (not U.S.), Rob said, "This whole legacy thing is a bit difficult . . . but that sort of pomposity of assuming that 'godfather' mantle is a bit odious. It's hard to talk about the genesis of all that. A lot of people take credit for that sort of thing. I don't, personally." But is there something odd about downplaying one's role, especially since Rob has been a constant presence in Australian music?

Maybe it is odd, but it's consistent with most Australians' character. It's a national trait, modesty, and its close relative, false modesty too, of course. Really, I don't want to think about things like this legend and icon shit. It's quite meaningless. I'm a fan, in the main. I started out trying to copy Iggy Pop, got over it, and kept on with bands. I've outlasted a few people so I'm now old enough to be this fucking elder statesman. Spare me.

What does Rob feel is the true meaning of the song "New Race," which has been misunderstood for over two decades, not unlike The Rezillos' "Someone's Going to Get Their Head Kicked In (Tonight)" and even Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA"?

Deniz wrote "New Race" in response to our then producer Charles Fisher's request that he write a teen anthem. He knocked it up overnight. It's about kids mutating through the power of rock 'n' roll into a "new race." It's a bit of fun. All the bullshit about it being a fascist call to arms is patently absurd.

Jules from Phantom records, Rob's former neighbor and even roommate, said: "The one thing I remember about Rob is all the time we were together he never had any photos of himself at an age younger than what he was then!" Is he remembering this correctly?

Jules has a virtually photographic memory, so I'd be nuts to argue with him. And in this case, he's right. I couldn't give a damn about photographs of myself. Now, there's a wild pronouncement.

It's known that Rob really liked the British bands of the 1960s, including the Animals, Kinks, and the Beatles, but why in the 1970s did he become so turned onto American music like the NY Dolls, Stooges, and Alice

Cooper (I believe his early band the Rats covered Alice Cooper)? Did he believe they were carrying on the legacy of the 1960s British bands, like Pete Diggie from the Buzzcocks wanted to form a group like the early Who?

I latched onto those U.S. bands because they sounded so good. Their nationalities had nothing to do with it. At the time—the early '70s—British rock was mired in that boring Free, Deep Purple scene, apart from the Faces and the glam crowd, which I really loved, and when I heard Funhouse, I completely flipped. It wasn't like me consciously going: I think I'll give the U.S. boys a go for awhile. I didn't think in terms of legacies and stuff, you just follow your heart, it's not that theoretical. The Rats never played any Alice songs, they were too hard for us to learn. We did about six Dolls, five Stooges, "Strutter" by Kiss, a couple of Velvets ones, "Waiting For The Man" and "Rock & Roll," tried to play "Call Me Animal," but it was too tough. It didn't occur to us that we could write our own material, like, that it was allowable.

Is that what led to his eventually covering the likes of the Who and Love later on?

No, we needed a couple of songs to make up the numbers for an EP release, and I suggested we learn "The Seeker" and "She Comes In Colors," both big favorites of mine. Since our drummer played the trumpet really well too, I thought it could substitute for the flute on "Colors."

At the same time, was he seeing all the prog bands of the time, like Blackfeather, Cahin, Piranha, Kharvas Jute, Coloured Balls, Carson, Spectrum, Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs?

None of those bands shaped shit for me. I liked the La De Das for a few songs, and Kharvas Jute were interesting, but it was more a case of those bands contributing to the reason I got into playing the kind of rock 'n' roll I'm into, because that scene was a pile of shit to me. A sort of anti-influence thing.

At one time, Rob booked bands at the Oxford Funhouse, like Johnny Dole and The Scabs and Mangrove Boogie Kings, and the Saints. From what I've read, he was pretty unbending about keeping out shitty bands. How did this lead to, say, producing bands like Died Pretty, the Hangmen, City Kids, and Fur? Does he pick and choose his projects like he used to pick and choose bands to play the club?

Not really. Apart from being quite full of shit and on a bit of a crusade championing real rock as I then saw it—I booked bands that fitted the style of the place—grubby, unpretentious, rocking bands. The bands I recorded with fell into my lap through my association with Citadel Records mainly. I wasn't in any position to be choosy. It turned out that I smelled like roses being associated with such great groups, like Died Pretty and The Hangmen obviously are. I first got production offers because I seemed to be the only one around Darlington that had actually spent any time at all in a studio.

A scene can't develop with just bands alone, so could Rob talk about the magazines like RAM and Bucketful of Brains, and the record stores like Ripple Records, Phantom Records, Pitt, Waterfront, and Anthem?

I suppose I should say that, for me, it wasn't just Detroit music that got me interested in playing music, apart from all the stuff I heard in my so-called formative years, it was the New York Dolls that got me to thinking I could give it a shot.

Well, Bucketful is an English magazine that is still going—but RAM, or Rock Australia Magazine, was just a mainstream rag publicizing the stuff that was already popular. I tried writing reviews for them a few times, but the editor kept changing my words to ones he preferred, and cutting out the more insulting stuff. Those records stores all sold imports, so they were instrumental in people in Sydney getting hold of the hipper releases from the US and UK. I remember the day Jules got in his batch of the new Lou Reed album, Metal Machine Music. It was meant to sell for \$16 but after only a week it was down to \$2 and no one was going for it. The best store around that time was White Light, which was run by Mark Taylor, later of The Lipstick Killers.

In some ways, supposedly the poet Penny Ward was to the Birdman what Patti Smith was to early Blue Oyster Cult. Does he

remember anything about her that he can talk about?

I remember Penny as being a great person, always pleasant, and I was really impressed when eventually I heard some songs she and Angie Pepper (Deniz's wife now) had written, but there was never any involvement Birdman-wise that I can recall. We were far too insular to incorporate others into the fold. Penny used to be a Funhouse (our rock club in Taylor Square, Darlington) regular.

What happened to his early band Hard On and later his project working with Richard and Peter from Sunnyboys? Could he give a brief rundown?

I've got no idea what Hard On refers to, band-wise at least. Around 1980, though, the guys that eventually became the Sunnyboys and I rehearsed songs. We were playing Jeremy Oxley's stuff, really well crafted stuff, good tunes, and a few of mine, "No Next Time," I forget the others. In the best career move I made on other people's behalf, I decided they didn't need me because Jeremy sounded so good on his own songs when he was showing them to me. Also, I would've compromised their immense teen appeal.

Two of the Birdman were former paratroopers or Navy men, and two were med students. Is this what partly defined the tension in the band?

Actually, our bass player Carl who left was a paratrooper, and Deniz was a flight surgeon in the US Navy, but that was well after Radio Birdman broke up. Deniz and Pip were med students in our early days. None of this created any tension, though. Our tensions stemmed much later on from being cooped up together in a crummy flat in Drayton Park in London, and the endless drives in the so-called Van of Hate over there. Previously, we'd only been shoved together for two days at a time, not week after week getting on each other's nerves.

What is the one defining moment that he can recall from the tour with Flamin' Groovies?

The endless tuning of their 12-string guitars between songs, and the accompanying banter about how a guitar is like a woman and you've got to treat them with great care, ad nauseum. They were a good band though. We didn't have all that much contact with them as I recall.

How did he feel when the band was dropped from Sire (home of the Saints too) and were unceremoniously replaced with the street punkers Sham 69, who besides their cover of the Animals, were a pale comparison to the rootsy thunder of the Birdman?

I wasn't aware that Sham 69 replaced us. We were culled from the label along with a host of other bands when Sire was dumped by their distributor or some rubbish. Sham 69? That is an insult. They sucked. Bad note to end on.



Rob Younger Part Two

With Jeremy Saperstein

Really, I don't want to think about things like this legend and icon shit. It's quite meaningless. I'm a fan, in the main. I started out trying to copy Iggy Pop, got over it, and kept on with bands. I've outlasted a few people so I'm now old enough to be this fucking elder statesman. Spare me.

There are so many great bands that came out from your area and time, like Radio Birdman and the Saints and, later, the Celibate Rifles. Can you speculate on what spurred so many great bands? Also, you said that bands like Radio Birdman and the New Christs are more appreciated away from Australia than at home. Can you speculate about that?

Well, maybe just the fact that it's a bit more mysterious when you come from a place like that. I mean, Radio Birdman wasn't really popular then in Australia or anywhere overseas. All this stuff, it's sort of unfamiliar, but I can't really explain why. It's just like Australian popularity, somewhat like the enduring popularity of Jim Morrison or something where he had the decency to die so long ago that he hasn't shit on his own doorstep, as they say.

What do you think spurred Radio Birdman to do something that wasn't racing up the charts—what pushed you guys into doing the kind of music you would perform?

Well, it's an internal question, really, just a natural inclination. We wanted to start a band up and actually it was an amalgamation of two groups that were playing very similar material—the band Deniz had called TV Jones and the one I had called the Rats and when we found out we were only living a couple of miles apart—but completely unaware of each other's existence for about a year, perhaps less than that. It was a bit of a surprise. When Deniz got kicked out his band—if you can imagine someone kicking him out of a band—

Uh, no.

Well, they did. I was there when it happened. We could start something now and we overlapped. . . . We never really had to discuss what sort of stuff we could play because we were just teeming with the sort of thing we were doing. . . . We had all the songs, various Stooges. I introduced him to Blue Oyster Cult. He resisted at first, and then I talked him around and he grew to like them quite well. The other things were over-emphasized, the Detroit thing has been over-emphasized because there's lots of surf music and there's various New York bands and English stuff, but it always seems to come back to the Stooges and the MC5.

I think the name probably lends a lot to the Stooges. . . .

But it doesn't sound like the Stooges—I mean no one else does either. Have you ever heard a band that actually sounds like the Stooges? I know we certainly haven't.

(Laughter.) I have a cartoon from the New Yorker hanging on my refrigerator door. It shows St. Peter standing before the gates of heaven, in front of two doors. Above one is a sign reading "Hated The Stooges," above the other is a sign reading "Loved The Stooges." I think that's pretty much the way it is: there are two kinds of people in this world . . . Depending on who you talk to there's other kinds . . .

The catchall question: What or who's coming up now? What's your take on the current Australian or New Zealand scene?

I don't know anything about New Zealand . . .

Sorry, it's just my own American-skewed vision of geography—everything is either "U.S." or "Not U.S."

We don't hear anything about that. I wouldn't know one band playing New Zealand, except maybe the one that used to be called Shiite but they changed it to Pacifier because of September 11th. I don't go out to see very many bands because all of these rock bands that come and play, they don't change much. The music doesn't change much. People talk about the "new

rock scene" and so forth, but things haven't changed very much. There's all these rock bands playing in Australia, although I'm glad to see them, I'm sure some of them are great—I just have trouble naming them these days. When you play in a band, well if I go to a gig, I get hassled. I wind up getting questions. I can't just turn up and watch the show and be anonymous. I don't mean I'm besieged by people, or anything like that — I just find it uncomfortable, so I've stopped going to gigs a long time ago. I just play records and shit. But I'm sure. There's a big audience for rock and

roll. We know that music's all over us now, and also there are other distractions, so perhaps it's not as important to people's lives as it used to be. I can't imagine that people are as obsessed with records as I was.

I'm kind of in the same boat. I just had a baby, and I can't imagine looking at my shelves of records and having to explain to him what they are, 'cause he won't know, and then trying to explain what the music was. It will be an interesting thing. That leads to this question: what keeps you in the music scene?

I just like playing shows, really, I suppose. It's a bit of a calling. Pop and rock have been my obsession since I was eleven—that's when I started buying records, and I haven't changed. Really, my taste hasn't changed that much. I just keep buying stuff and it seems like I can still buy the same thing in essence, just the styles change. I don't want things to be reinvented, I just want to do the same sort of thing I always did . . . new tunes and slightly new ways of doing the same thing, and although some people think that's utterly limiting and becomes a bore, I find it endlessly fascinating. Y'know? Kind of sorry about that, but this is the way it is. It's why I keep doing the same thing, why I keep making the same record.

There's a lot to be said for that. I think most of the artists I like find the point that they like and they just keep making different takes on it. I suppose really cynical people would say that they keep doing it until they get it right, but—

Well, they do, but in a way, that's what you try to do. What I want to do is make a record that I know I'd buy myself if it wasn't me and I wasn't getting a free copy (laughter). You just want to make something you can listen to and then divorce yourself from proceedings and consider it a piece of work and hope that a lot of other people like it. I don't have that. I used to say things like, "Well, I don't give a fuck if people like us or not" and that sort of thing. In a way, that's sort of true, but in another way, you can't exist without an audience either, and I'm happy that people enjoy some of the stuff we've done. I just want it to be a bit better. Will the record improve anything? I mean, I think there are plenty of records. Some people just don't care what makes you do all these individual records back there and you'll never top that shit. I feel uncomfortable, too, with the implications in questions like, "You're still doing the same thing. Why don't you stop because you're not getting better?" Sometimes it's implicit in the question. Shit, don't people understand? It's not like a career—it's just something you do because you really enjoy it. You'd stop if you had to. It'd be really easy to do.

You'd stop if it was a job, and not just your life.

I think it would be easy to stop if it came right down to that. I think those questions are asked by people who just don't actually understand why it means so much to you—which is always hard to explain.

If it's a passion, I don't think you can really put it into words, and as you guessed, I did not mean to ask—I'm getting older, and I'm wondering how long—I'm always amazed that I still like music after twenty or thirty years of liking it so much. . . .

You don't have to be. You probably always will. You might lose interest, and that's okay, but it's not the sort of thing you can go, "Okay, that's enough of that," and go on somewhere else.

Yeah, not a hobby like, say model railroading. . . .

Well, that's probably a really great hobby. I always wanted to have a really cool Marklin train set. I always loved those, but I never actually got hold of one. They're sort of expensive now.

I Wear My Sunglasses At Night **Talkin' Bout Iceland** **Rock with Singapore Sling's Singer**

By Jeremy Saperstein

You supposedly put the band together while working at a bookstore and deciding that you should get a record deal by playing the music you wrote and recorded at home live. Strangely enough, for a bookish guy, you minimize the lyrics on "The Curse Of..." so much that they mostly become a mantra-like backdrop to the hypno-fuzz rolling current of guitars. Sure, there's some "river of kisses," but did you purposely want the music to feel more cinematic, more like brooding surf rock, than driven by vocals?

Yes, I did. I do have a road movie obsession and a lot of the songs and sounds are inspired by those films and soundtracks. The record cover is also a bit like a poster for a noir road movie, so yeah that cinematic feel is intentional. I really like surf rock too and it's had a lot of influence on my music. As for the lyrics—I wanted to keep them simple and minimal. "Overdriver" is all about very basic impulses. It's all about going crazy with desire. It's all very sexual, but in the same way a lot of early rock'n'roll music was very sexual. It's really not that far from Bo Diddley or Eddie Cochran. And "Listen," lyrically, isn't that far from dance and techno music in that the same word and phrases are repeated over and over again. I like repetition both musically and lyrically.

You partly defined coolness as songs by The Creation, Suicide, and the Stooges, yet you've said that Singapore Sling is also inspired by 1980s British music. Like who? Nick Cave, Spacemen 3?

How Does It Feel to Feel by Creation is a very lazy and sexy song... to me that's cool. Ghost Rider by Suicide is very minimal and hypnotic with great edgy rockabilly vocals... To me, that's cool.. Either you understand cool, or you don't. I do. I've been cursed with the gift of understanding cool, like Spacemen 3, The Jesus and Mary Chain, Loop, My Bloody Valentine... Nick Cave is Australian. He's cool, too.

During the band's recent debut American tour, they were often touted as heavy drinking, black motorcycle jacket clad, Black Motorcycle Club-esque riders of the new Icelandic storm, but what does that cliché portrait of the band miss entirely? What subtleties are the American writers blind to?

Well, I don't mind being portrayed that way. I do have a leather jacket and I do drink quite a lot but that's also every other person I know... As soon as people dig a little deeper they'll probably find out there's more to us than that. Or less. People mustn't overlook our sunglasses...

How did the band end up choosing to cover The Standells' "Dirty Water," and say, not Lou Reed or Iggy Pop?

By accident. I was playing this new riff on my electric guitar one day and I had the Standell's "Dirty Water" stuck in my head, and I started singing it over the riff, and it fit perfectly, although there are minor changes in the melody. I've always liked the Standell's "Dirty Water," so I thought, why not cover it? And we did. With a different riff and a different beat. To me that was cool... And as a matter of fact, we're thinking of covering "Vicious" by Lou Reed some time soon.

At first listen, the band has some touches of 1950s-era music, though much more like the Cramps version than the Jerry Lee Lewis version of the era, but what elements did you possibly carry into Singapore Sling from your previous 1996 "rockabilly" band, The Bang Gang?

Well, the first song we wrote together in The Bang Gang was called "Listen Baby," so there's one element. The song was instrumental and it some very catchy rockabilly riffs, so there's another. The second, and last, song we wrote was called "On the Road," so that road obsession had already kicked in back then. So, there's the third element. I love rockabilly music, and I think that's always gonna show in the music I make.

"I don't have any weak points, only strong ones," you told the American press, which sounds almost as overly confident and ambitious as Dr. Frankenstein giving life to his monster, or the Hives, for that matter. Do you see that attitude as something essential and inherent in rock 'n' roll, or just a put-on, a way of getting critics' attention?

Well, I'm sure I have a lot of weak points, but it's not something I think about everyday, so when I'm asked: "Do you have any weak points?" I'd

rather give an answer like that than a long silence. Maybe one of my weak points is not being able to see my weak points... But why would I give them away?

Though you did receive some good press (pic of the week in both Time Out New York and the New York Post) while on tour, it was Tank's (bassist) other band The Funerals that made the front page of the New York Times music section after a reporter followed them around Iceland. Did that cause any friction or jealousy?

No. That was almost two years ago and we hadn't even started recording our first album, so for us, getting in the New York Times seemed pretty far off, anyway. We're good friends with the Funerals and there has never been any friction or jealousy between us. And also, we've been getting a lot of press in the U.S. since our album came out, a lot more than one article in the New York Times, so even if we were the jealous types, we wouldn't have any reason to be jealous.

Recently, there seems to be a kind of music explosion in Iceland, yet when PBS/Frontline aired their show "Iceland—The Future of Sound," featuring profiles of Mum, Gusgun, Sigur Ross and Apparat, many listeners wrote in to the PBS website saying that Apparat were "lightweight" Kraftwerk wanna-be's/clones. You happen to share a rehearsal space with Apparat. Do you think U.S. coverage is both a blessing and a curse, meaning you gain access to a huge audience, but also some hostility?

U.S. coverage can only be a blessing. Everyone has an opinion and everyone wants to share it with the world, but it's not like everybody's gonna listen and let them change their minds! We're bound to get hostility as well. If we read a bad article on us, it's not like we're gonna start crying or thinking: How can I better myself as a person and musician?" I mean, I love Apparat, but they're bound to be misunderstood. You can't please everyone, and that obviously shouldn't be your aim. I'm entitled to think Blink 182 suck and everybody's entitled to think Singapore Sling suck. We'll keep on rocking in the free world.

Whereas most people think of Iceland and connect it in their memory to the Gorbachev summit (if they are old enough!) or Bjork, they know very little of the scene: the club Gaukur a Stong, the record store Hljomalind, or the festival Iceland Airwaves, which you have played. Could you tell readers about these places, or others?

Gaukur a Stong is the oldest pub in Reykjavik. Beer was illegal in Iceland until 1988, but before then that place used to sell "fake" beer, which was non-alcoholic beer with alcohol added to it. Apparently it tasted horrible. Hljomalind was an independent record store that went out of business recently. But there's another one called 12 Tonar, which is really good, so no worries. The Airwaves festival is like CMJ, or SXSW, only not as big, since Reykjavik is a small city and there are not very many places to play, but it's a good festival. It's very good for Icelandic bands. We got a lot of attention after playing there, especially after the gig last year where we played a great venue. I'm looking forward to seeing the Kills play this year.

Lastly, supposedly Reykjavik, having the greatest concentration of newspapers published per person in the world, is the most literate city in the world. Do you feel that while in America, you felt slowed down, dumbed down, or ill-at-ease when dealing with America's tendency to feel suspicious towards well-read, well-cultured people, or did you feel Americans were just as bright and informed as folks back in Iceland?

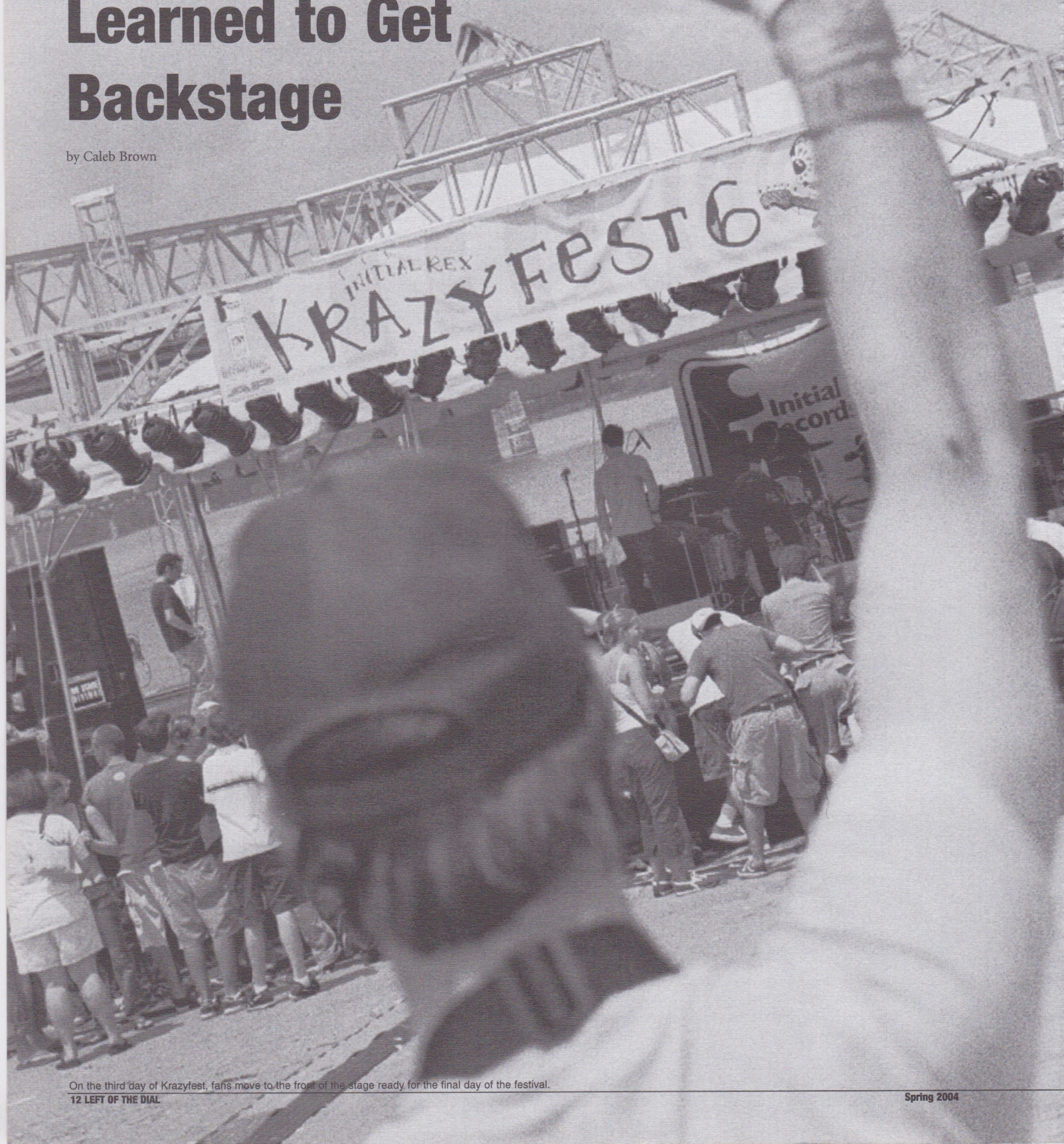
Well, I'm not so sure about the clerk at the gas station in Shit-Creek Arkansas, but most Americans we met were really cool and informed. I think a lot of Europeans are suspicious towards Americans too, thinking they're all dumb, but I know a lot of Icelanders and Europeans who are dumb. America's a big country inhabited by a lot of Americans, and it's hard to say that Americans are either like this or like that. We were pretty satisfied with our American experience.

Lastly, what will the band to destroy the moribund post-rock sound still rolling out of Iceland's clubs?

Kill, kill, kill...

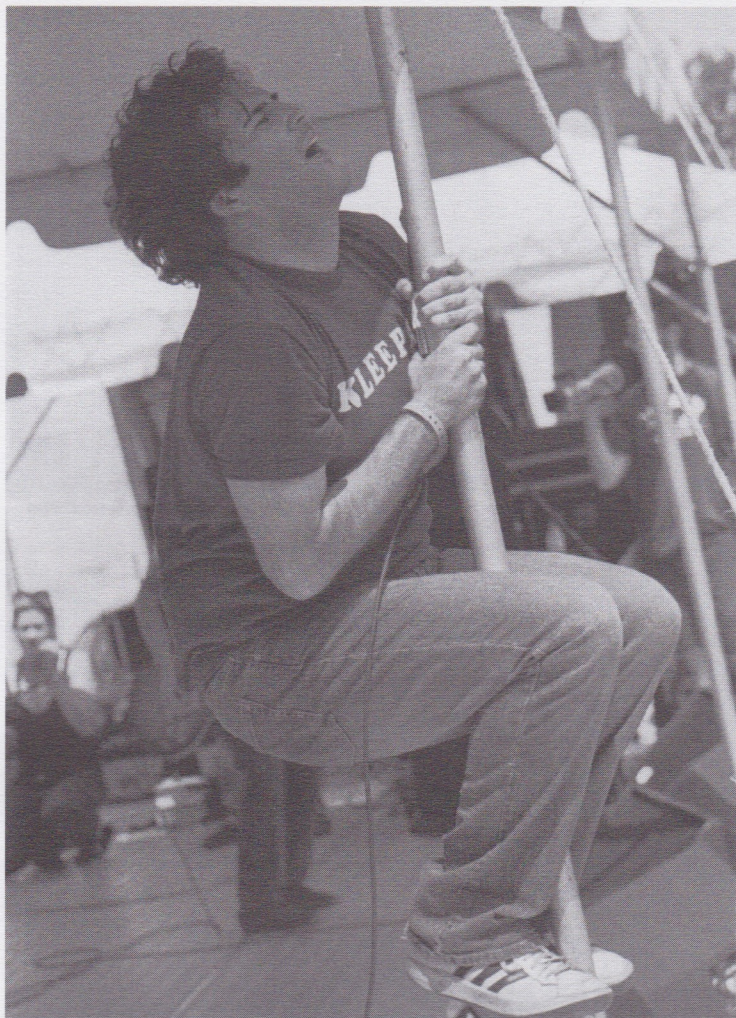
Krazyfest, and How I Learned to Get Backstage

by Caleb Brown



On the third day of Krazyfest, fans move to the front of the stage ready for the final day of the festival.
12 LEFT OF THE DIAL

Spring 2004



Pole Dance Ralph Cuseglio, lead singer of Rye Coalition, grabs the pole during their set Sunday.

On the last day of July, two of my friends and I filled our tiny car with tents, blankets, and my brand new copy of Erlend Oye's *Unrest*, and headed out on the sixteen-hour drive from Austin, Texas to Louisville, Kentucky. We were going to Krazyfest—Initial Record's rock festival that takes place each year on the edge of the Ohio River in downtown Louisville, Kentucky. After stops in Arkansas, too many fields to count, miles of road construction, a failed attempt at eating in downtown Memphis, and my delusions of seeing Graceland, we arrived at Waterfront Park late Friday night, just before Reggie and the Full Effect took the stage.

Reggie was entertaining to see. Their stage show consisted of the members dressed like Jack White and Har Mar Superstar's illegitimate child—everyone wearing matching long, black wigs and pencil-thin mustaches. As they played, men in tiny bikini briefs danced all around the stage with two-foot dildos and super-soakers, making it by far the most homoerotic performance of the weekend. After their show, the sky let loose with biblical style thunderstorms, and my friends and I headed to our campsite to sleep in our car. That would be the beginning of our on-again-off-again relationship with the rain that would last all the way through Andrew WK's performance the next night.

The next day, one of the security guards let us in before the rest of the crowd, which was a good thing, because the 200 or so other people who showed up that morning weren't allowed in until about an hour after the doors were supposed to have opened. Due to some slow stage assembly, most likely caused by the wrath-of-God storms the night before, the concert started almost two hours later than it was supposed to. That is a bad thing for any all day festival, because it means that either the first bands don't get to play at all, or all the bands suck it up, and are only allowed 15-minute sets. This concert happened to follow the latter. The majority of the bands that played on Saturday were only given the chance to play three or four

songs—a tease to most of the crowd that had come expecting the bands to play full sets.

The concert was divided into harder bands on Saturday, with the more straight-up rock acts playing on Sunday. In spite of the short sets, the shows in the early afternoon were packed with x-ed out fists pumping in the air, pits, as much screaming as I could take in one day, and a massive amount punk rock haircuts. Some of the best performances I watched that afternoon were given by Playing Enemy, Suicide File, and Atreyu.

The majority of my early afternoon was spent watching the gate. During Throwdown's set, some kid climbed the giant stack of speakers in front of the stage. After the security guards scrambled to get him off the speakers, I quickly got backstage with two of my friends just before the Blood Brothers' set. Sitting in the least conspicuous place we could find, I figured we'd be found out right away, and forced back to the front. To my surprise, not only did I not get kicked out, but I got up onstage, met the official photographer for the festival from www.bandphotography.com, and figured out how to get back in if I needed to. I was set for the rest of the weekend.

The Blood Brothers were incredible. Their intense guitars and dual-style vocals owned every part of the stage, and, in front of the pumping fists of the crowd, they screamed and sang until they dropped. From the second they started playing, the audience was engaged. Their set was intense.

Next was the Locust, and despite my affinity for bands in costumes reminiscent of super-heroes from the '50s, I just wasn't into them. My friends enjoy them a lot, so it might be possible that I'm just missing something about these guys. I don't know. I skipped Hatebreed for a drink special at a bar a couple of blocks away from the concert, and made it back in time to meet the festival's headliner, Andrew WK. Andrew WK definitely had the crowd on his side—most of them joined him onstage at some point or another. The venue was packed with people eager to party as hard as he would tell them to, and when he broke into "I love Krazyfest! Oh yes, Krazyfest!" the crowd went ballistic, and a dogpile ensued. Andrew made it through with just one gash on his forehead.

That night my friends and I headed out to a local bar with a mechanical bull. One of my favorite things about the whole experience was that we had friends wherever we went. At the bar, we immediately befriended about twenty people just by looking at their wristbands. So after riding the bull, spilling a drink on a straight-edge girl, getting blood spit all over me by some rednecks whose fight I broke up, we headed out to spend another night in our car.

The next day was a little disappointing, not because of the bands, but because the clouds finally rolled away, and the majority of the crowd sought the shade away from the stage rather than watching the shows. People spent more time at the vendor's booths and wading in the nearby fountains than watching the performances. In spite of this, there were amazing performances. Rye Coalition took the stage in the late afternoon, and took every opportunity they could to get the people going. The band's lead singer, Ralph Cuseglio, climbed the poles, broke microphone stands, and brought the band's "grab-life-by-the-balls" attitude to the stage.

Finally the boys from Austin, TX, Recover, took the stage. Their rock 'n' roll style and powerful performance was one of the highlights of the festival. With powerful guitar riffs and catchy hooks, they brought rock to the shores of the Ohio River. One of the most memorable moments of the festival was Dan Keyes picking up his guitar and swinging it over his head, throwing it directly into the audience. Even my jaw had dropped by that point. Shortly after, Cave-in capped off my Krazyfest experience with a great performance, pulling out songs from their earlier, metal-influenced material.

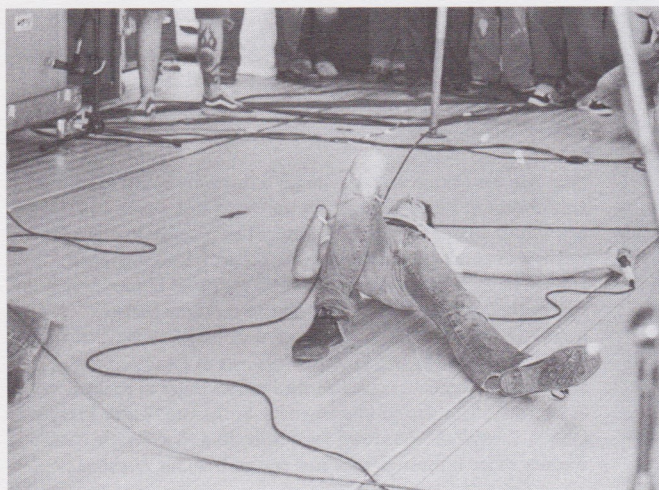
Krazyfest was everything I had hoped it would be.



Festival goers take a break in one of the fountains lining the Krazyfest grounds.



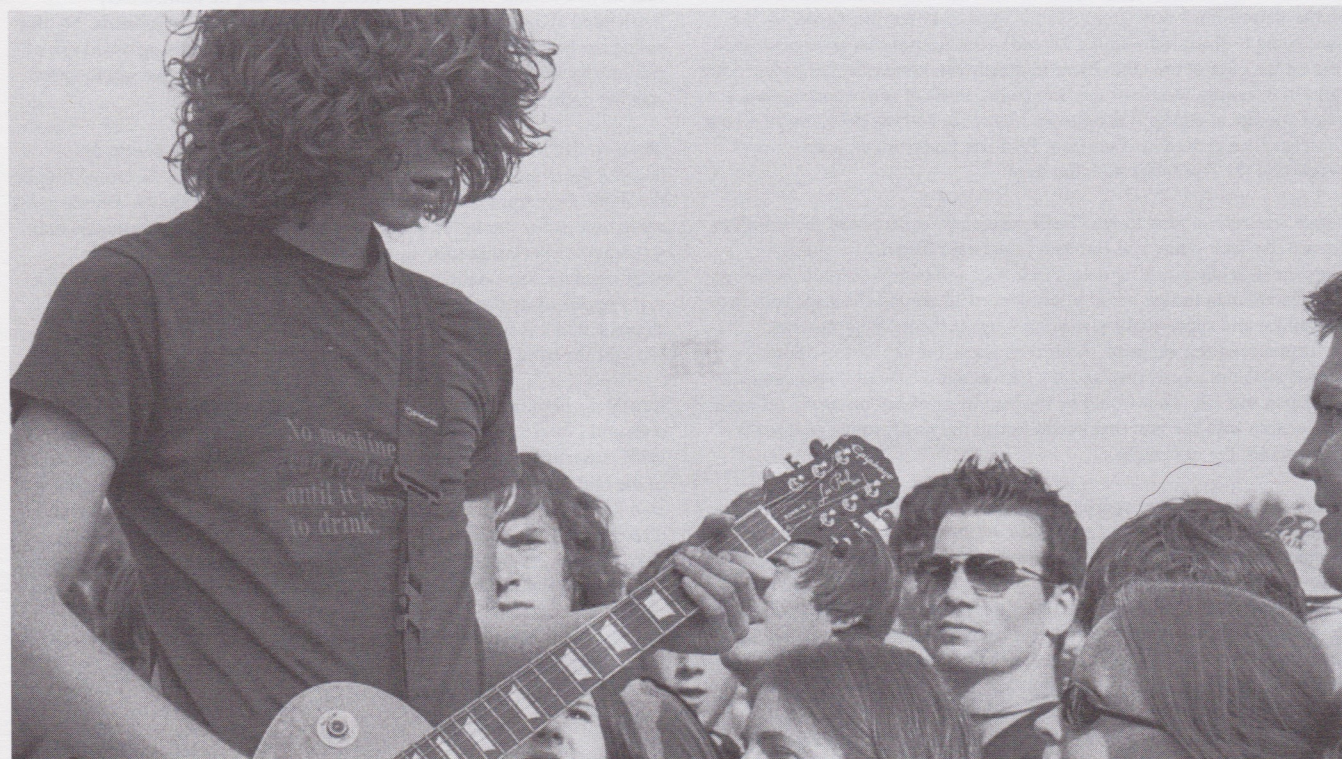
Playing Enemy takes the stage on the second day. Shane Mehling takes a second to get closer to the audience.



One of the lead singers from The Blood Brothers is overcome by his own power, and finds himself crashlanded in the middle of the stage during their set on Saturday.



The Blood Brothers take the stage in the late afternoon of the second day.





An Interview with Felix Havoc

So let's talk about the band. DD isn't too much like Code 13 or Destroy! It's a lot more straight up hardcore.

Yeah, I draw my main influence from early '80s hardcore and all those bands had elements of early '80s hardcore sound in them. I don't write any music myself—I just write the lyrics—so it sorta depends on what the guys I'm in the band with are writing. But all those bands play fast, aggressive hardcore. C13 and Destroy were more towards crust and grindcore, and I listen to that kind of music to this day, but right now I'm in a band with guys who are into more of a straight-ahead hardcore sound. But always, I value the music for its speed, intensity, and aggression. That's the main thing for me. I think all those bands, none of them put out any ballads—it's all fast, aggressive HC. I think all those bands were strongly influenced by stuff like Infest. In all those bands you can hear that sound—that really amped up, really hyper thrash.

How are fans of C13 and Destroy reacting to the material on this tour? Is anyone surprised or disappointed?

I don't know—the later C13 material was not that dissimilar from what Damage Deposit is doing now. A couple of reviewers have said they didn't think it was punk influenced enough, that it was too much towards the SE/HC sound. I know a lot of people who listen to music along a broad spectrum, be it crust or SE, and appreciate the music for its merits rather than what little genre it falls into. And if people are going to split hairs over you know, "Yeah, that guy doesn't have dreadlocks anymore, so it's not cool," whatever. But so far it's not like any has been boycotting our shows or anything.

You've written a lot in MRR and Heart Attack about the difference between what we call punk nowadays and SE/HC since '88. Do you still draw a major line between those, or do you see that line as politics—or a lack thereof?

I don't know. During the early '90s, SE got very commercialized and moved way out of HC and into metal, and I think that turned off a lot of kids who were coming into SE from more punk or HC roots. And there's definitely a movement, I think, to put punk influence and thrash influence back into SE and bring politics and ethics back into SE. That's where I would align myself, personally. I think that the No Reply song "Take Back the X" sums up the argument pretty well, the idea of taking straight edge back to its punk roots. I mean, that stuff in the '90s really turned me off with the \$30 SE hooded sweatshirts and all the chugga chugga mosh metal bands. To

there's been a real rebirth of fast, aggressive HC. I was super-inspired at the Chicago fest in 2000. It was a real pivotal event for me, when we had What Happens Next?, Life's Halt, No Justice, and everybody played. That was an intense show, and since that point, we've had a real resurgence in D.I.Y. HC, and I think things have really got moving in the last 3–4 years. It's really changed my opinion completely. I was really down on the state of the HC scene in about '93, '94, and it's really turned around in the last few years. I was really inspired by bands like Life's Halt, DS-13, and Total Fury. I'm much, much more upbeat and enthusiastic about things than I have been at just about any point. The '90s had its bright spots—certainly bands like Crudos and Dropdead—who were very good—but I think there was a lot of mediocrity, there was a lot of bad commercial hardcore, and there was a lot of D.I.Y. HC that maybe had aspired to high ideals, but musically was pretty turgid. There was a lot of this emo kind of stuff that really didn't seem to go anywhere for me, musically. But things really started to heat up around 2000, 2001, and it's been going pretty strong ever since. I mean, hardcore right now is very popular, I think. I definitely wouldn't complain about how things have been going over the last few years.

So you don't think HC has run out of fresh ways to reinvent itself, or fresh ways to attack again?

That's a common argument. However, for me, I don't care so much about HC progressing or doing anything new or different. When it comes to musical taste, I like dumb hardcore. I like simple, straight ahead, aggressive, three-chord, thrashy, hardcore punk. I prefer when bands strip down all the added elements and go right back to the proven early '80s formula. The bands I'm most fired up about lately, bands like Career Suicide, are playing a really stripped down, lo-fi, early '80s sound of hardcore. It's cool when bands add new elements and progress and stuff, but it's so easy to follow that to a conclusion of playing, like, the Neurosis kinda formula, where you start out a really progressive HC band and get more and more progressive and musical and it loses all of its fire and enthusiasm. So—does HC need to reinvent itself? I mean, I don't know—do you ask old guys that are playing the blues or big band swing to progress? It's a style—it's got a pattern, a formula. Some people might think that that's redundant, but I'd rather see bands playing honest, sincere, aggressive HC music than trying to do something like a lot of this stuff like Dillinger Escape Plan. Stuff like that goes right over my head. I just don't get it—I just don't. It sounds weird to me. And people will think I'm a numbskull 'cause I like dumb HC.

I mean, that stuff in the '90s really turned me off with the \$30 SE hooded sweatshirts and all the chugga chugga mosh metal bands. To them, SE was just about build-ups and mosh parts, as opposed to not drinking or doing drugs. The conformity and the commercialism really turned me off—and the music was pretty weak.

them, SE was just about build-ups and mosh parts, as opposed to not drinking or doing drugs. The conformity and the commercialism really turned me off—and the music was pretty weak. And I mean, that's still around today. I mean, we have a bunch of SE mosh metal bands in Minnesota. Their version of SE seems kind of superficial and I have kind of a hard time getting where they're coming from. Cause the music to me sounds a lot more like that Korn, Limp Bizkit type nu metal stuff—it sounds a lot more similar to that than it does to even bands like Chain of Strength, and much less Teen Idles or Minor Threat.

Let's talk a little bit more about your writings. You've said in a couple columns that you feel like HC in the past decade has been generally second rate.

OK—I think you're probably quoting some stuff I wrote some time ago. I definitely felt that way in the early to mid '90s, but after about 2000,

In some of your writings, you say you don't like bands like Fugazi, who you've said turned their backs on HC. Would you agree that most of those people left HC because they saw it as too restrictive musically?

Right. I still greatly admire Fugazi for their non-commercial stance and when you make a lot of arguments, they're the exception because of that, because they have a high degree of artistic integrity, even though I don't care for their music. I would say, though, that HC as an artistic or cultural movement, was one of the only such movements to pretty much universally be disavowed by its progenitors within a few years of its foundation. And privately, a lot of those guys look probably at the course things took and are somewhat embarrassed of it or think they've created a monster. I think if you read some of the people that were involved in the early SE movement, (they would) comment on stuff like Hardline, you know, "This is an ultra militant reactionary version of SE," and they're like, "Whoa, what did we start?" But, okay, people want to grow and develop as musicians, that's cool

for them, but I'm not gonna follow it. I'd be looking for the young, angry kids who are taking it back to the basics.

Do you think it's possible, you're just an idealist that's stuck in this one time period hoping for years past, and actually out of touch with the reality?

I don't think that's necessarily the case. Because on a regular basis, at my record label, I get demo tapes from kids that weren't even born in 1982, playing 1982-style HC. I mean, punk rock's essential elements have a universal appeal to disaffected young people that transcends time. There's always going to be angry, disaffected kids that don't fit in, and these kids are looking for a form of expression. For some kids, it might be skateboarding. For some kids, it might be graffiti writing. For some kids, it might be HC punk rock. Some kids might get drawn towards techno—though I don't know so much about that stuff. But you see what I'm saying? There's an essential appeal to that music. I mean, I work in a record store one day a week, and I still sell Minor Threat and Black Flag to 13-, 14-year-old kids, and they get real amped up about it. Now, if that music was somehow past its prime, there's still some power there—there's still a message. Even if the people who created that message initially have all disavowed it, they made their mark and left an artifact that is continually being reinterpreted by young people who are at a point in their lives and in their minds that those people who created that music were maybe at 10, 20 years ago. OK, you see these guys who are crazy old record collectors who have to have every Miles Davis record, ever. And they sit in their room and listen to their old Miles Davis records and wish it were New York City in 1964, y'know? I'm not like that. I'm out playing HC everyday. I'm booking shows, I'm putting out records, I'm seeing bands, I'm hanging out at the record store. I mean, this is still happening. I'm not preserving some period in the past, a movement that rose, fell, and expired. It's still a very vital form of artistic and musical expression and I think it will continue to do so for quite some time. The style of HC that I like seems to come and go out of style, you know, but there's always gonna be a core of people that are into it. You look at that period in the late '80s, early '90s, not that many people were playing early '80s inspired HC, but you had bands like Voorhees and Crudos, that were going right back to the roots, just not that many people were into them at the time. But things came around and a little later, people got sick of this overblown, pompous, commercial, metal-influenced HC and what did they do? They went back to the roots—simple, aggressive, three-chord thrash. So it does have a continued appeal.

In a couple of columns, you discuss what you call the consumers in the scene, who pretty much buy music, go to shows, but don't do a band, don't do a zine, don't get involved much.

Yeah. In my mind, really, there's only a few hundred really active people in the scene in America and again in Europe and again in Japan that are making it all happen. It's really common, on the touring circuit, to find a small to mid-sized city that will have one really motivated person, or a band will start setting up shows, and this will become a major destination for touring bands, and it will be a big hotspot on the touring circuit for two or three years, and then the people who are active will move away and it will

I would say, though, that HC as an artistic or cultural movement, was one of the only such movements to pretty much universally be disavowed by its progenitors within a few years of its foundation. And privately, a lot of those guys look probably at the course things took and are somewhat embarrassed of it or think they've created a monster.

die down. And that kind of shows you that punk has an appeal to kids or people into punk or who would be interested in punk, just about everywhere, but what it takes is some people who are organized and motivated to make a scene happen—to create some sort of center of gravity. And oftentimes, all it takes is one kid to start renting out the local VFW hall and throw in some bands together and something will gel around it. Now, most of those kids are very passive. They're just there because there's something going on and they're of the consumer mentality. And maybe when those people who are really active leave, the scene crumbles quickly and those kids move on to something else.

Right. I think a lot of people who criticize you say that you're too negative. But it seems to me that in many ways, you're actually quite

optimistic. I mean, you've got a new band, you're on tour, you're label has put out more records in the last two years than it did in the last—how many years has Havoc been together?

Eleven years. Yeah, I've put more out lately than ever before. I'm much more positive and upbeat about things today, as I was telling you earlier. Negative, maybe. Critical, I am very critical. I'm eager to make a point by jumping all over something to provoke people into thinking about what it means to the scene. I don't hesitate to call BS on things I don't agree with, and even if it's something I'm fairly ambivalent about, I will put it out there to provoke some thought.

I've often observed that the punk scene isn't self-sufficient. People are always expecting clubs to give them a break—many promoters can't afford their own space, so they often ask other people for favors for their own scene. How do you remain optimistic in a scene that oftentimes gives its audience so many reasons to do something else, where there's more money or more kids?

You're right. That's one of the principle reasons, I think, people leave the scene, because other endeavors offer more rewards and options. If you're a musician, you can obviously make a lot more money playing music other than HC punk and not be burdened by any sort of ethical dilemmas about doing lots of drugs, having sex with lots of groupies, being totally commercial. You're not held to any standards of artistic integrity. I understand all those criticisms. The D.I.Y. HC scene is tragically flawed in some areas. I do think that shows are pretty criminally under-priced. People really take venues for granted. I think records and CDs are pretty under-priced, vis-à-vis what it actually takes to run a label or be in a touring band. Almost every show we play is five bucks. I mean, the first show I went to in 1983 was five bucks. Gasoline back then was 69 cents a gallon. Now it's a buck and a half, two bucks. Shit has changed, but people aren't willing to pay more than three dollars for a 7", ever. And 7"s were three dollars back in the mid '80s. There are certain taboos that nobody wants to break, and when they are broken, people bitch and whine about it to no end. People expect that you're going to have some outside source of income to keep your band or label going, but you're still going to be able to achieve stuff that other bands are able to do and break even from their efforts.

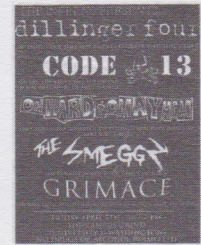
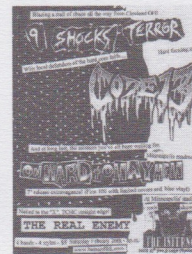
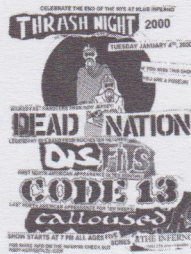
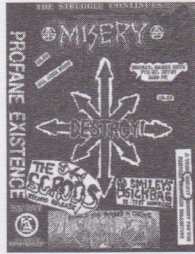
And I understand that people get disaffected—nobody likes working for nothing. They do a couple DIY tours, they feel like everybody just complains about their efforts and they're held to a higher standard than they feel they can meet, and they're just like, "Fuck it, let's just play commercial emo music or whatever and try to get on MTV."

But I don't know. That's not where I'm at. Artistically, musically, politically, whatever. I like to have a higher set of standards, a code of ethics that I live up to and aspire to and I'll be critical of where I see breaches with that on both sides—people I think are too commercial or people I think are too extreme about D.I.Y. I'd like to think there's a balance somewhere in between, where all bands can go out and do their thing and put out records and tour and cover their ass and not have to lose money and get stressed out and break up because they can't put gas in their van, also without

swindling the kids, without being the next Blink 182. And I do think it's possible. If you look at some of the bigger bands in the '80s, some of those bands like 7 Seconds and Subhumans. They were very popular and they had a very large audience, but still organized everything on very D.I.Y. principles. And I still don't think that's impossible. I don't think it's implausible for a band that regularly draws 500 kids to a show to still be able to do D.I.Y. tours, circumvent the music industry, charge a reasonable price for shows, and merchandise and be able to do their thing for that scale of an audience without having to get sucked into the music industry. I think that the music industry is so desperate for anything—I mean, it's been losing money straight for years now—that any band that starts to draw 4 or 500 people on a regular tour, they sign it. They're all over it, be it HC or emo, metal core, whatever. They're on it right away because they're

sniffing for anything that will draw in kids who are pretty disinterested in what they're putting out. There are bands that have gone all the way to pretty major success without compromising—Fugazi and Big Black are the two I can think of.

Do you think people that have been around for a while have learned their lessons, or has the scene eventually become a little better oiled? I know in one of your columns, you said that distribution has improved.



Well, economically, I think great strides have been made. There's a lot a reinventing of the wheel, but as a whole, at the moment, the D.I.Y. touring network functions pretty well. My complaint actually is that too many shitty, undeserving bands abuse it and detract from the efforts of bands that are really dedicated. I mean, almost everywhere we've played on this tour, several other bands have showed up and tried to jump on the bill, because they book these weird tours where they just find some other band's tour dates and follow them around. Shit like that drives me up the wall. Don't go on tour until you've built up some kind of fan base of people who actually want to see you. Even in Minneapolis, we bring top-notch bands into town, but we still have to put them on with the well known local band 'cause most people aren't motivated to come out to see anything but the most popular bands. But yeah, great progress has definitely been made. The first big tour I went on was in 1990, and the difference between the way band touring was back then and now is phenomenal. I wouldn't trade the worst tour you could go on today for the shit we tried to pull off then. It was just so disorganized; the scene was so dependent on rock clubs, and so few people doing D.I.Y. shows. It's great now that anybody can put out a record or go on tour, but it sucks that everybody does. The resource gets abused, but it is there to serve those bands that are really trying to make a go of it.

Lastly, I want to talk briefly about the political climate and the upcoming election. I there are a lot of similarities between the Bush and the Reagan administrations: trickle-down economics lies to the American public, etc. As you know, Reagan was used as fodder for a lot of punk art, punk music and slogans. So how is the current administration affecting the punk scene, or is it?

I think the simple answer is that after September 11th, a lot of people who formerly were critical of the administration kind of clammed up. It seems like being critical of the government suddenly became very unfashionable. And it's so much easier to steer the discourse away from political topics to safe topics, and I think that's what's guided a lot of the public discourse in art, media, and music. And the retaliation by the corporate media against anybody who is critical of the government is so intense, I mean look what happened to the fucking Dixie Chicks, you know? The corporate media, especially Clear Channel, Time Warner, and Disney, who seem to control most radio and publishing, they're so quick to censor, or not censor necessarily, but side-track or silence or marginalize anybody with a message that is critical of the status quo, that it's just easier to stick to safe topics and not do anything critical. I'm just as critical of the establishment as ever. But the political climate is almost surreal—I mean, Orwell couldn't have written anything as bizarre as what happened in the 2000 election and the reaction to September 11. I mean, the truth is truly stranger than the worst science fiction. It's just mind-numbingly bizarre, the times in which we live. I feel like a real cop out for not going out and protesting and being radical, but it's such a bizarre situation. My views haven't changed one bit. I'm more critical of the establishment than ever. I'm very critical of other critics of the establishment as well, because when I see these protesters, I often find that they have some hidden agenda that I don't agree with as well. I'm really soured on the activist scene as well as I am the established political scene. I don't like a whole lot of the alternatives people propose, either. I'm not keen on voting, I think most of the radical groups or political parties

are just as full of shit as the establishment, so it's easy to withdraw to a point where you focus on HC punk rock, which is the main influence in my life.

But do you think the political climate has manifested itself in the punk scene in any way?

Punk is way more right-wing now than it ever was. There's much more right-wing agenda in punk and HC music than there was in the '80s, I'll tell ya that. Part of it is just that HC has moved closer to the mainstream, but

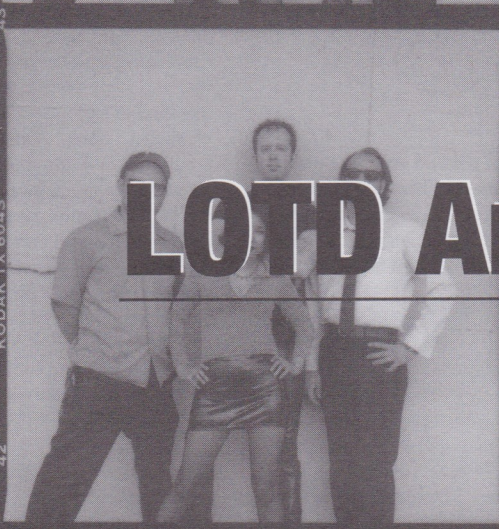
it's not uncommon to see very conservative agendas advanced in HC. But I see a lot of these street punk bands that are advancing right wing or Christian agendas and that just seems kind of antithetical to punk's roots. But also, really outspoken political bands tend to get marginalized in a scene that only other kids that are into activist punk music will go and see them. Maybe a lot of kids listen to Catharsis just 'cause they like their dark, metallic HC, as opposed to their outspoken message. But most other bands that are trying to go for that kinda thing tend to get ghettoized within the scene and the bands that tend to get really popular seem to be the ones that take on safer topics. But actually, also there's a flipside to that. There seem to be very popular bands like Anti-Flag and Strike Anywhere that have this social agenda, but I find it really hard to rationalize against the status and the kinda weird, mall punk, Warped tour kind of scene.

It's sort of an easy-to-digest message, like Rage Against the Machine saying "Fuck you, I won't do what you told me," which isn't really sending any particular political message.

Yeah, it's really hard to take it seriously and, to me, it seems contrived and superficial. And the music to me seems kind of contrived and superficial, too. It doesn't seem to have any balls to it, any aggression to it. It seems like this kind of upbeat, mid-tempo, middle-of-the-road catchy punk with these lyrics that I don't... know. I mean, maybe those bands, their hearts are in it and they're doing something good, but it doesn't really go over to me right. I have much more respect for a band like Contravene or the 1905 that is this outspoken political band. I might not like their music very much, but it's cool that they're all about advancing their message through the music and the artwork and I have a lot of respect for that. I think unfortunately, those kind of bands tend to play for a lot of people who are only into that type of music. Los Crudos is an example of a band with a real political message that really got out to a wide HC audience. And I think it would be cool if there was a real D.I.Y. band that got a message out to a lot of people the way Crass or Conflict or somebody did in the '80s. But I do think a lot of people have just clammed up since 9/11.

Finally, where is HC going, what do you hope for it, and what's the ultimate goal?

The ultimate goal? I think things are pretty cool the way they are, really. There are a lot of flaws and things to criticize. It could be a lot worse. It has been a lot worse. I don't really see an endpoint for HC music or the movement. I don't really see an expiration date. You look at shit like blues or bluegrass music. That stuff's never gonna die. It's part of the American experience or the cultural landscape. It may come in and out of style, it might enjoy periods of popularity and periods of dormancy, but essentially, since the early '80s, there's always been an underground punk movement that's kept things alive. It's a continuum. There have always been threats, like commercialism or repression by the police or authorities closing down venues, but the kids always seem to find a way to triumph over that kind of adversity and keep things going. There's always impetus to create some more raw, aggressive punk music and the more people fuck with it, it just gives us more reason to keep pushing forward.



LOTD Archive

Left: The Damns, hanging out at Rudyard in Houston before a show.
Right: The Magnetic 4, outside their practice space in the factory district/old Chinatown in Houston, with editor David in really tight, shiny pants!

The Politics of Time and Opportunity

As I write these last-minute notes on the LOTD photo archive, which I know often feels more like haywire Kodak moments than Annie Liebowitz's cool and controlled surfaces, the weather has plummeted to around 30 degrees in Ozone City (yeah, yeah, let me guess, Pittsburgh, you're eating icicles for breakfast right now), and the one thing that makes me want to write even a single word about photography, that most vainly technical of all the arts, is the black and white photo of Billy Holiday that blocks the gray curtain and stares down at me like a Black Madonna (no, the Orthodox one, not the rock star). She's so solemn and detached, yet still hanging on. There's a glass in her hand, her tight black sweater makes her thin as the stem of a flower, a huge microphone juts up and takes over the left side, and her hair is pulled back and tight, revealing the angularity of her brow. One necklace dangles down to her stomach, and she looks like she never wants to sing a note again. The photo is a poem that solidifies this very moment, this soft thorn of memory, this slightly withered lotus, this haunting jazz refrain. That's what I want a photo to do and say, and I have almost no idea how to do it, since I shoot from instinct, using the

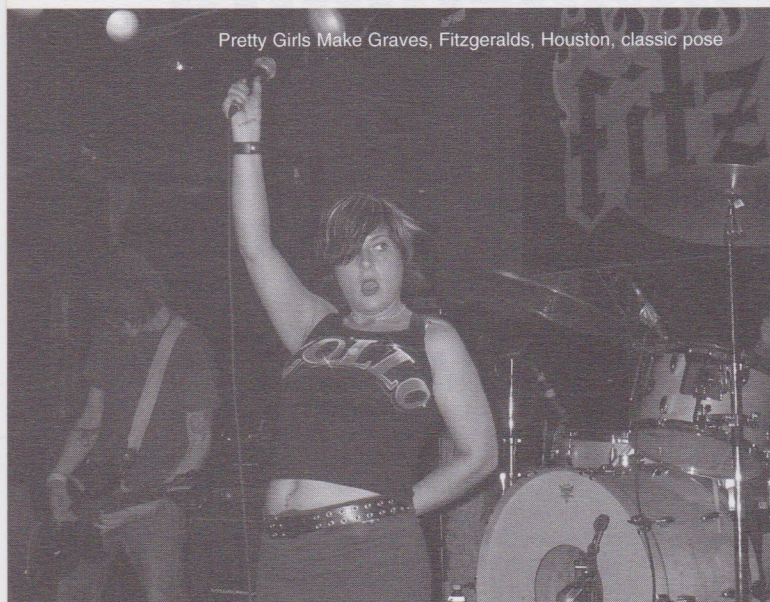
compass of my gut feeling to weather through any given concert and grab a celluloid memento. The only training I had was one high school class with all the metal dudes, called Industrial Arts, or something akin to a graphics workshop. We learned how to set type, run a rudimentary press, make buttons and screen T-shirts, and finally do something rather than read those youth traps called books all the time. But just like punk rock told me to get behind a drum set, write a fanzine, and use my head, basically, it also told me to snap photos. I practice what I now (with a wink and a sly smile) call fotos libres (free photos), meaning I am unbound. Digital cameras, like computers themselves, have turned every Tom and Jane into art commandos, capable of delivering mostly mundane work, but sometimes a real gem. I'll let you decide. And, of course, I have to shout out to all the people along the way, from the dark days of Xerox until the nu wave of Adobe, who have sent me photos that never ended up gracing the issues of LOTD like they were supposed to. I just hope those folks, including the unnamable—the few anonymous photo warriors—are not too begrudged by my belated investment in these pages. Sorry, life happens.



Sent to No Deposit No Return back in the 1980s, unused



Editor David with his girl pop punk band, London Girl, Menil park, late 1990s



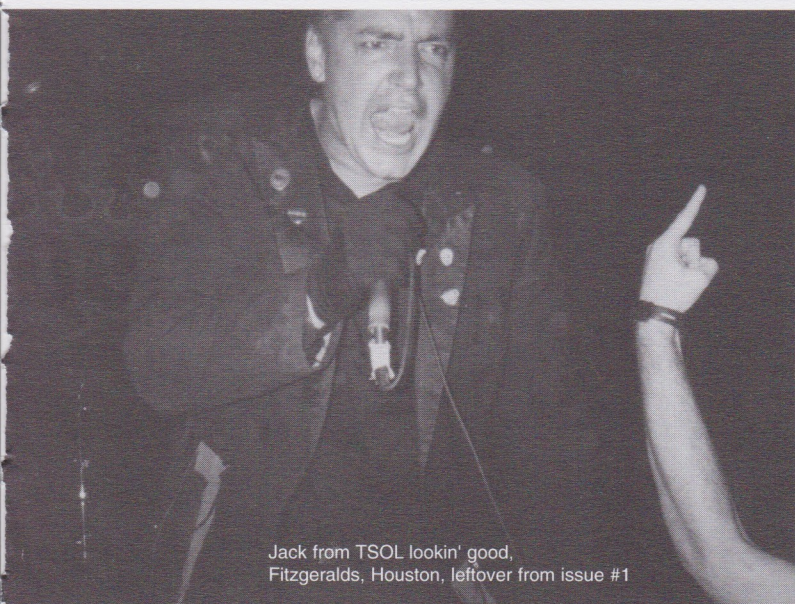
Pretty Girls Make Graves, Fitzgeralds, Houston, classic pose



Secret Hives shot, without their mod clothes on in Houston

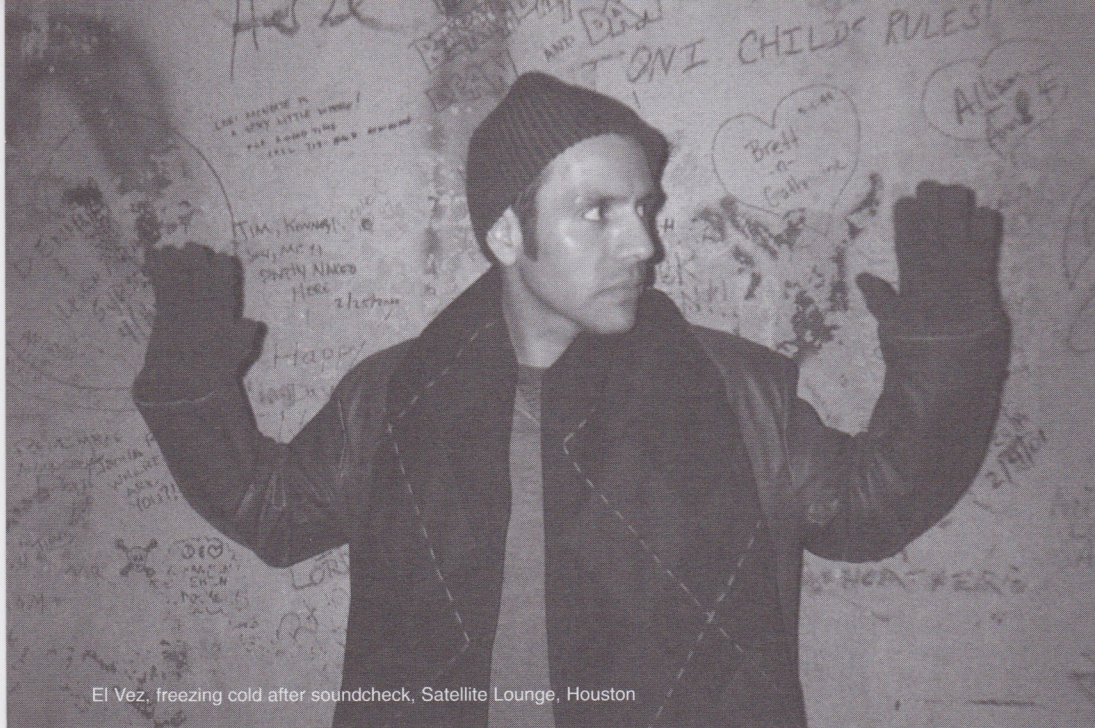


Unwound, Engine Room, Fitzgeralds, Houston, photo by Matt

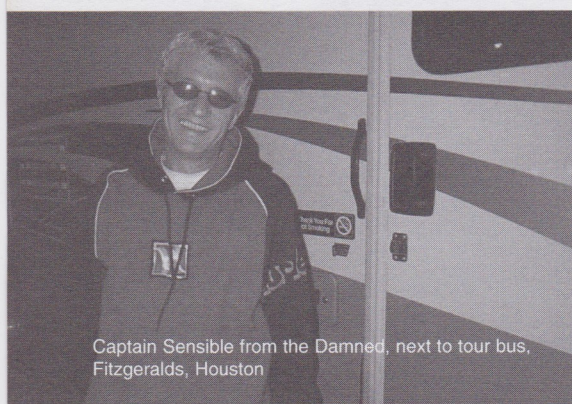


Jack from TSOL lookin' good,
Fitzgeralds, Houston, leftover from issue #1

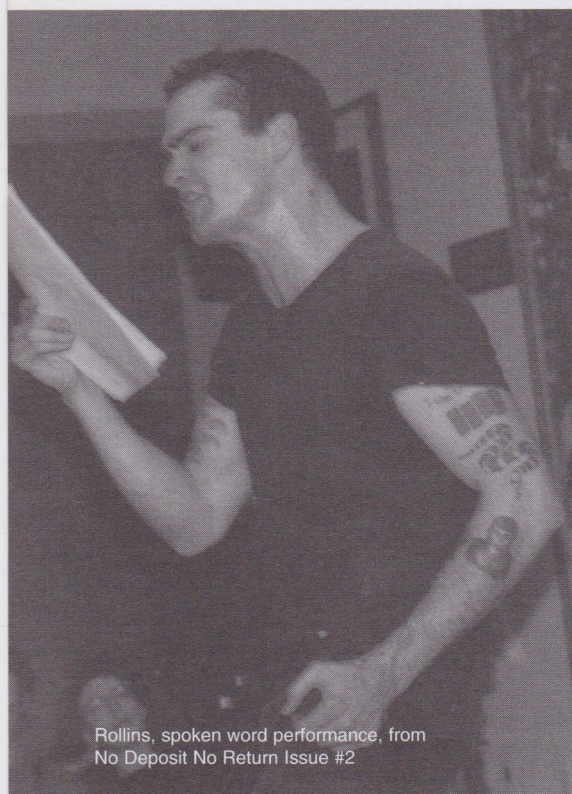




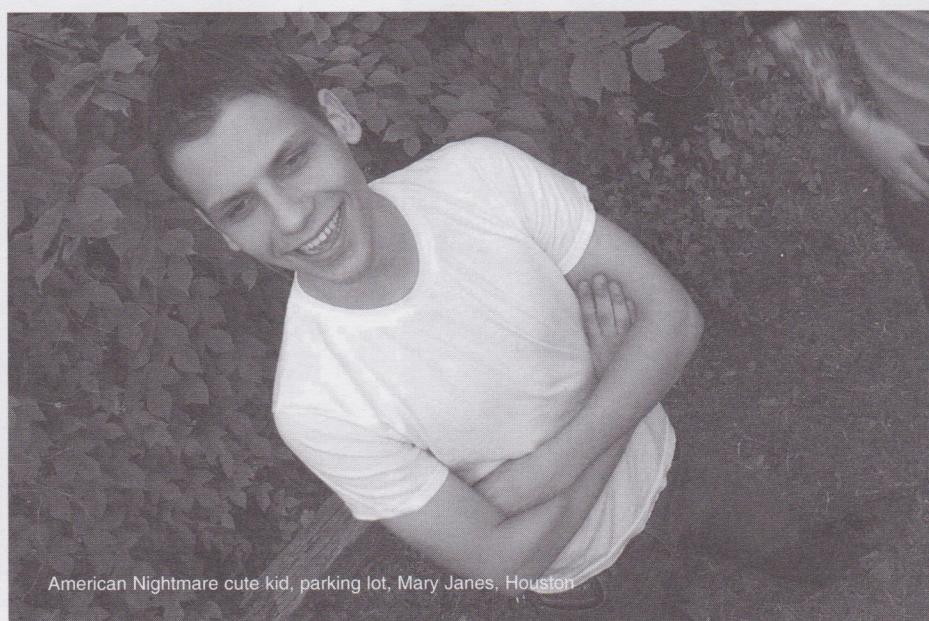
El Vez, freezing cold after soundcheck, Satellite Lounge, Houston



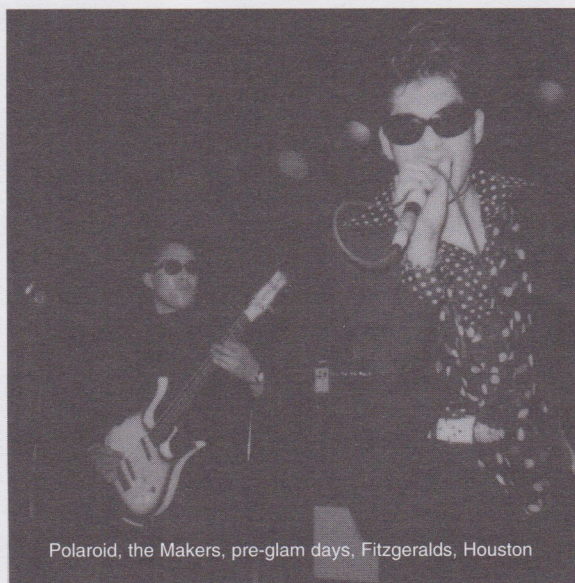
Captain Sensible from the Damned, next to tour bus, Fitzgeralds, Houston



Rollins, spoken word performance, from No Deposit No Return Issue #2



American Nightmare cute kid, parking lot, Mary Janes, Houston

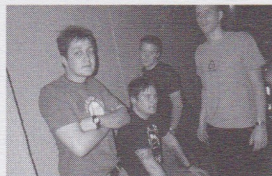
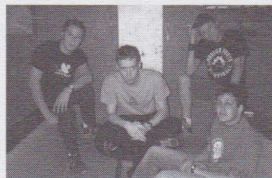


Polaroid, the Makers, pre-glam days, Fitzgeralds, Houston

All, older and better, Fitzgeralds, Houston



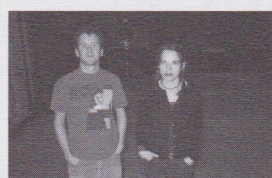
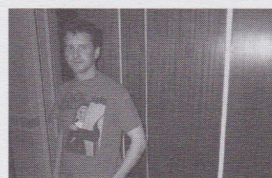
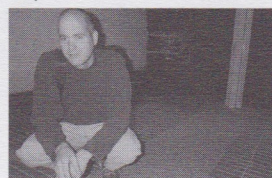
Hey Mercedes



The Faint



Superchunk



Easy Action with hardcore hero John Brannon, Rudyards, Houston



Out at the barn with Out Cold, photo provided by Mike Frame



The Immortal Lee County Killers, frenzied and fiery at Rudyards, Houston





The End is Just Another Way to Say Begin Again What We Talk About When We Talk To Jarboe

Back in a 1999 interview, you mentioned that you'd like to collaborate with Trent Reznor, Metallica, or Tricky, yet this time round you have chosen the more obscure, but still highly regarded band Neurosis. What led you to the project?

I have known Neurosis for years. We have always felt a sense of camaraderie and understanding of each other's work. This collaboration has been years in the making in terms of the goal to make it happen.

Online you wrote: "I was pleased with how the vocals came out and I am excited about this upcoming CD with Neurosis as it is a project we talked about doing for years. Lyrically, it comes from a place of solitude, soul searching." How exactly does one convey solitude when working on a project full of people?

When I write words, I do so alone. We didn't dialogue per se over the words or music. They came together from our own places. I think the resulting album sounds personal and intimate.

Earlier in the year you wrote, "The more I travel, the more I learn where I am and where I have been inside myself. I now see the path I am on in my own work. The direction towards minimalism and abstraction and away from the narrative voice. . . ." yet the remix CD and the Neurosis project seem the opposite of that approach, so is this push towards minimalism a result of having worked on those projects?

It is the result of all of the music I have worked on to date. The future direction I was talking about is the album I am making after the MEN album, which is the next full solo release from me. It is the follow up to Disburden Disciple. MEN has been four years in the making and features me in "duets" if you will, with a diverse group of people such as Blixa Bargeld and Alan Sparhawk and David Torn and Paz Lenchantin. The album after MEN will consist of my piano work and the voice used as a texture in addition to "abstract" words.

Challenge and pushing myself to the point of exhaustion (and beyond) is right at the crux of every decision I have probably made in my entire life.

Neurosis is one of those rare bands that can sound "heavy" without having to rely on rock clichés. Were you familiar enough with Neurosis to trust their instincts, or did you come to the plate with a few reservations about being a guest in a band with a long history and following?

I have experienced every Neurosis album ever made and I love what they do. Yes, I trust them explicitly. We have a strong bond. In terms of my own history in Swans, Neurosis and I have the "long history and following" aspect in common. This awareness between us both was one part of our mutual respect. We are both long-term career musicians who live what we do.

Your online, open-access web diary seems the most candid, honest, vulnerable thing since writers like Anais Nin and Walt Whitman decided to not fear candor and transparency. What led you to make your almost daily thoughts almost immediately available to the public?

I am regularly told that it is surprising how I am "down to earth." Well, I have always believed that there is strength in vulnerability and strength in having nothing to hide. For example, I have talked about the fact that I have never known stage fright. I believe that stage fright comes from having

something to hide. Through my open thoughts in "artery," as my online journal is called, I have realized from the resultant feedback that the more open and real I am to the people who have an interest in my work, the more they see themselves and find a connection. There is universality in human experience. Also, even though I am conscious to remain open and vulnerable, that is not to say that I do not also have an awareness to take things in stride (i.e. "thick skin") at this point from years of being a public persona. You cannot be over-sensitive and conduct a popularity contest if you go into the public arena. You may resonate with some people and not with others. Ultimately, I have learned from keeping 'artery' and being so open. It is at the core of what I do in my songs.

Anhedoniac, a watershed record you now call "harrowing, harsh, and the most beautiful album I ever made," was in part a response to a series of paintings you saw exhibited in Atlanta that pushed you to use the "hideous fear and pain" you were feeling to make an album during a period when you painted your room black and lost 12 pounds doing it. In contrast, what was it like to make the album with Neurosis? How was the process, and the context, different?

Anhedoniac was a result of extreme loneliness and loss. It was a disease in full grip. A type of breakdown.

Technically, the process of the Neurosis + Jarboe album was that I had a notebook of ideas in terms of words and when I heard the initial music, certain words responded to the music and attached to it. They presented me with music in the form of ideas and rough drafts and then I set my voice and words to it and then they flushed that out with more music to respond to the voice.

Emotionally, the music guided me.

Richard Kern's (who has always been a huge part of the New York music scene) photos of you for Anhedoniac reminded me of his most intense work of the mid-1980s for bands like Sonic Youth and his transgressive

films. How exactly do you identify with the work of Kern (you told an interviewer, "Richard was the perfect photographer to do justice to what I was trying to convey), and do you respect the fact that he shoots for nude magazines?

I worked with photographer Richard Kern and Kembra Pfahler as "scar and gash" makeup artist because I wanted to have the visual images for the album documented and presented by people from "the neighborhood" that gave birth to Swans. It is where Michael and I lived (the East Village, N.Y.C.) for many years and both Richard and Kembra are part of that original scene to which I am strongly connected, as is Swans. I respect both Richard and Kembra. And yes, both have been featured in "nude" magazines. One behind the camera. One in front of it. Richard Kern is also published by Taschen, and Kembra Pfahler has shown at the American Fine Arts gallery.

Listening to the remix album, I was reminded of a recent journal entry from the last tour where you mentioned dancing on stage, which some people do not expect. Do you feel there is always some essence of physical movement, gesture, and dance to all of your albums, even in the most quiet moments, from the Swans to Sacrificial Cake and the newest work?

Do you now liken concerts as a means to an end, a promotion of product or a means to earning a living, or do you think that you will always see it more akin to performance art, cabaret, something carnivalesque, that should retain the power of Karen Finley, rock 'n' roll, and Marlene

Oh, YES. As far as an analysis of "Jarboe" is concerned, that is a damn good question. Challenge and pushing myself to the point of exhaustion (and beyond) is right at the crux of every decision I have probably made in my entire life. When I moved to New York to join Swans in the early eighties, a close friend in Georgia described it by saying: "you NEED the challenge." I can't ascribe it to the study of Zen and athletic pursuit because it is how I have been since my earliest memory. It is more likely something I inherited, a family trait. Genetics and conditioning. I was pushed to be an achiever as a child and the expectations for me were

[illegible]

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LITHIUM X-MAS

CLUB CLEARVIEW APRIL 27

I am regularly told that it is surprising how I am “down to earth.” Well, I have always believed that there is strength in vulnerability and strength in having nothing to hide.

You told ZEN that singing “Love Will Tear Us Apart” has brought tears to your eyes on stage, and while M. Gira appears dissatisfied with his . . . version, your elegant crystalline version appears on the Swans re-releases. What draws you back to the song as part of your repertoire—fan expectation, or deep fondness for the song?

Both. I will always remember the time I sang it in a Swans concert in Manchester, England to a large audience and they all sang along with me. Amazing. Like a huge choir of believers. Also, the lyrics hit home again and again. They describe my own experience with my relationships and when I sing that song, it is truth. Recently, a man told me that romantic love was merely a "fairy tale" and not for someone like him. I keep coming back to that assessment myself. "Love" has been an ideal impossible for me to sustain. This is not to say that as a romantic, I don't keep trying!

You are one of the artists featured in the Creation books Women's Studies/Cultural Theory book called Catamania. Have you looked at the book, and how do you feel knowing you are featured alongside Nina Simone and Kate Bush in an academic text?

Seriously, Adele Olivia Gladwell did extensive research for this project and it is written from a "cultural theory" point of view, definitely. I think she chose vocalists from diverse backgrounds that have a specific vocabulary that is uniquely their own. To have been included in this study along with Nina Simone is of course, an honor.

Your approach to life seems as much cerebral (Zen Buddhism) as it is actively physical (weight-lifting, kick-boxing, mountain climbing). Is this balance and focus part of the reason you have become so incredibly

always to excel and make my mark somewhere. Being this way results in spurts of superhuman productivity but it comes in fever washes and is not necessarily a carefully planned crucible. Also, you are never satisfied with your output and your standards are so high and particular that you keep pushing and reaching and pushing and reaching again and again and again. An effort to attain the impossible? You don't see it that way. You keep believing it IS possible. You are not kind to yourself. You utilize "mind over matter" as your mantra. One of the dangers of this mentality is that predators (and in a woman's case, these are usually men) come along, see your endurance and mistake it for weakness, and move in for the kill.

You seem to hint at your philosophy when writing, “an observation again (that keeps getting richer and deeper upon reflection with all its manifestations) is that the awareness and determination resulting from non-desperate but self-assured fighting spirit and full-blooded vigor is essential for not just survival but a real sapience that leads to fulfillment. That fulfillment could be called: power, success, accomplishment, harmony, or personal Actualization—no matter what form it takes.” Are you full of more fighting spirit more now than ever? Why or why not?

Yeah, the "fighting spirit" is always there, but my grip on the reins is erratic. I get thrown on my ass a lot. I should have been dead by now with my leap-before-you-look trajectory.

You stayed in the Middle East, behind Damascus Gate in Jerusalem in the Arab Quarter, and although you avoid offering political opinions (“Noam Chomsky does not comment on my music—if you get my point”), as an artist what do you feel about the tremendous rift that seems to be growing between Islam and the West? Or do you feel that the whole conflict is misrepresented?

I feel it is horrific. I don't think it is misrepresented.

Why did you choose to record in Israel?

I had never been to the Middle East, and yet I loved the music from that

part of the world. I wanted to see Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Ramallah and Tel Aviv—and work with local musicians. I have no regrets about my six plus weeks in Israel. Jerusalem is an amazing place and if it had actually been safe to live there, I would have returned for a much longer stay of at least a year. As it was, car bombs and occupation by rifle-ready soldiers on rooftops, beatings and riots, tear gas and tanks . . . were a daily occurrence. I didn't escape the direct violence and found myself trying to flee for my life from the midst of a huge outbreak of fighting amongst Israeli and Palestinian men on one of my last nights in Jerusalem. The Israeli army showed up in their tanks. Men were carried away on stretchers. Blood was everywhere.

You told an interviewer, who asked you to give advice to a young woman trying to get in the music industry, to avoid "nay-sayers and persons who are all talk and no action." and also to have a personal mantra: "you are not your emotions." What do you mean by that?

Nay-sayers and persons who are all talk and no action are prevalent in the music world. Do you mean: "you are not your emotions"? Emotions are chemical and hormonal changes that are always in flux. You can observe them coming into you and watch them as they leave. You are not your happiness, sadness, or anger. They are mere shifts of chemical composition. They are not you.

You quote Tenzin Palm in your online journal: "IT'S NOT BASED ON SENTIMENT. IT'S NOT BASED ON FEEDBACK AND HOW GOOD IT MAKES YOU FEEL. That is not real love at all." That seems to relate to the above idea, but what then is love?

May I suggest: Tenzin Palmo <http://www.tenzinpalmo.com/> to your readers? Real Love is unconditional and expects nothing in return.

You also said, "Don't take what men who criticize you say too seriously." Do you feel that men are still unwilling to accept the power, knowledge, and intuition of women who have already repeatedly proven themselves? Some men, yes. This has been my experience, yes. The Controlling. The Power Play . . . yes, yes, yes. The Alpha Dog Syndrome. The Competition. The Resentment. The War.

How has this affected your own career, for it seems fair to say that in addition to controlling your art you also manage your business affairs as

I am most myself when I am performing and it has been pointed out to me that indeed it is the time when I seem most actualized, alive, in the moment . . . So, I have to say the latter description is closest to my heart.

well, "I do own & manage & pay for the Swans site as well as my own site. Michael does not have anything to do with the actual running or financing of the Swans site...that is all part of my company's business, The Living Jarboe Incorporated. I support Young God Records (Michael's company) by being a major purchaser of their products which my company then sells on the website to fans worldwide."

Okay. The clarification above about who handles the websites is neither here or there with this comment: men who are still unwilling to accept aspects of women who have "proven themselves" has affected my career in that I have been incorrectly perceived as a threat? And there have been predictable retaliations at times in aggressive and even violent ways.

Do you feel closer in spirit to designers like Jean Paul Gaultier (who made you a dress with top features of swans, Indian maidens, skulls, and roses) or with musicians playing in a bar somewhere in the downtown night? Why?

A-HAH! I love it. Both are me, baby . . . Both are me! ;-)

"I look around me and I see persons who have periods of crash and burn. the ones that pick themselves up and go back into the chaos that expelled them and ride it like a bucking bronco aren't necessarily 'taming,' relying on some kind of blind and stubborn ego or heroic imposition. They ARE trying a different method, readjusting their thinking, walking away with new insight. They get RESULTS and turned potentially destructive chaos into enhancement." Could you illustrate more vividly this method that would to appear to some as inviting

elements of chaos and confusion for the sake of insight?

Well, that's it exactly. Step into the fire. Shake it up and get down. Y'know? Find what it is you can use to inform you. Don't remain static or rely on what is tried and true. LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE.

"What is a 'gut feeling'? What is faith? Faith in something you cannot touch or see? The only way to live with loss is to negate the existence of 'reminders' so that the emptiness and awareness of abandonment is not center stage. You may alternate anger with disbelief, sadness with resentment, think you are living a lie . . . But mainly you are 'living' in a graveyard and it isn't on a Hollywood sound stage. You are not living at all. 'RISE FROM THE DEAD.'" Are you saying one should try to delete all the reminders and not have a living memory, because they will always form a graveyard that won't let you heal and go forth?

If you are even remotely obsessive and analytical, then hell yeah. For a time, yes. It is exactly that. A graveyard. For a time, to move on and find closure with certain things in life, the best way to do it is to remove tangible reminders out of your field of vision. Say you lived with an artist for 6 years who dumped you and broke your heart? Take her paintings down from your wall and put them into storage for a while. Put that photograph of the two of you laughing together on a camping trip under lock and key in the attic trunk for a while. It works. I have gone to a different geographic location to help me to forget. To help me breathe and not be overcome with grief or panic. To help me get out of denial and let go.

You wrote "No questions asked. No explanations accepted. No one leaves here alive" just hours before the 9/11 attacks, which is more than eerily prophetic. How did you respond initially to what happened, prior to sitting down and writing the other later entry in the journal around 1 p.m?

My reaction was that the mother who had adopted me and taken me in had been wounded and was screaming out in pain. I also immediately thought of the repercussions and hate virus from those quick to judge that would wrongfully come towards all Muslims. I had gotten to know many people who are Muslims in Jerusalem and I knew they would never support violence.

Lastly, you've said that you've "worked incredibly hard for very little in return in a tangible sense. There are Swans fans who continue to give

energy to feeling bitter about me for some reason. I have this to say: Get over it. Get a life. You have no idea what you are talking about. You are misguided & inept. You are an embarrassment. You are foolish." When you look back at the Swans, what are the things (memories, lessons, or attitudes) that you have carried forward into your career that most people would not easily recognize?

This is a topic for an interview all its own. The discipline honed. The "sanction" to see the "random" element and seize it. By working with Michael Gira in Swans and World Of Skin, these are two of the most important tools within my work as a musician. I knew from the beginning that we were going to do intense and valuable work together. Michael also saw my strengths and potential and it is through our work together that I was born and began to find my own voice. He told me "You're an American. Sing like an American" when I had sung for him in 1984 in my then-trained jazz vocal intonation. When I first met him, I called Swans "a project," but he corrected me and said, "I think we're a rock band." I told him I liked Europe. He replied he liked Americans. This was all unexpected. He was not "arty" . . . I found him refreshing. He was down to earth and he had a strong work ethic. We clicked. We had the same ideas about perseverance and lack of compromise. Michael and I were destined to meet and do those performances and make those recordings. He was my mentor, my peer, my husband, and my soul mate. Michael has said we were like magnets, drawn and repelled at the same time. I say we were also a powerful blast of mega dynamite. Who held the fuse and who held the flame? I'll let that be the visualization for tonight.



Harmony in their Heads

A Talk with the Buzzcocks

"Lester Sands" is over twenty years old, and you've always had it as part of your sound check, but what led to its inclusion on the album?

Pete: Well, it was a song that we always enjoyed playing at sound checks, and it just seemed like, why not do that?

But was the record done, and then you decided to tack it on?

Pete: No, it was one of the things, because it's only ever come out as a demo.

On Time's Up.

Steve: That's right.

Were you unhappy with that version?

Pete: It was a demo. It was the first time we had been in the studio as the Buzzcocks. It was the first time we had actually heard ourselves like that, so it was never anything more than a demo. A lot of people think of the Time's Up album as being an official album or something. I know it's different than the bootleg thing because it's at record stores and we get money from it, but it was never intended for release. It just found its way out as a bootleg copy.

Steve: We were rehearsing the new stuff and we said, let's do this one as well, because it's never been officially released.

Pete: The whole thing is to get enough songs together that make it worthwhile going into the studio, so we put on various things and tried. . . .

Steve: It was never released, so we thought, well, might as well have it as an official release now, so you go full circle, because we went back to the first demos we ever did and it seems we've gone back a bit more to our roots.

Is it true that Spiral Scratch only cost \$100.00 to record?

Steve: \$1,000.

Pete: \$500.00, including the pressing as well.

Steve: The production on that was really good because it was so bad it was good, if you see what I mean. When the engineer was messing with the faders and stuff, Martin Hannett was doing it all, because he said he was a producer, a kind of a wacky producer, so every time he would kind of mess with it, giving that idiosyncratic sound to Spiral Scratch, and he made it in 1976, and people were like, "What the fuck is this? It sounds tinny and weird, but it's exciting."

Pete: People have this idea that what you essentially sound like is what you've spent a long time studying and perfecting, so we did decide, yes, we were going with Martin Hannett and record something in an afternoon.

You knew Martin already?

Pete: He was our agent. So he used to book the shows for us. That's how we knew him. He became a producer.

Steve: That was one of the things about our time period. People worked in the dark off their instincts; it's a natural and organic thing. There's nobody like, "Oh, let's be careful, let's plan things." We never sat around a table. We just went in and did it. So, it had the natural fire like the things that were around in that initial punk explosion, it captured that magic.

What did you think of 24-Hour Party People?

Pete: The guy playing me was way too tall.

Steve: The thing about that was they showed you a clip of the Sex Pistols, a

clip of the Buzzcocks, then it leaps into the 19'80s, the Happy Mondays, and the Hacienda, which wasn't built until the 19'80s. There was a whole punk rock scene from 1976, and that's where we started off, and there's another film to be written yet, and if I have to write it myself, I'll fucking write it, or someone else can.

How well did the film capture Martin Hannett for you?

Pete: Well, he was an eccentric. He was a Manchester Phil Spector, if you like. And he did have a gun, which he did take out when he was drunk. He was crazy. And then we worked with him later on, on "1,2,3," and occasionally we'd record some stuff and he'd be mixing and he'd disappear, and you'd find him in the closet somewhere, looking for weird effects boxes or something. He'd just wander off and come back and start mixing again. Wonderfully eccentric.

Jon Savage wrote in England's Dreaming that Spiral Scratch, apart from being one of the first independent records of the time, was the first record to really capture the art aesthetic of new design at the time, meaning the photograph concept of the cover matched the music.

Pete: Well, we wanted it to be nice. I mean, we were doing it, and we were paying for it. We gave it the trouble of taking time and attention that major record companies don't usually invest in.

But did you do it for the sake of art, or to make a major label pick you up?

Pete: No, no, that's why even on the groove on the inside there was an inscription.

So it represented this big, complete package?

Pete: It was all about, well, like when we used to go around with Mondrian shirts.

Steve: Well, with the photograph, there was a Polaroid camera with only two pictures left in the thing. And the first one didn't turn out, so the manager was taking the picture at the time and said, I hope this one turns out, because otherwise we have no picture for the sleeve. So, you know, we didn't shoot a roll of film.

Just two shots?

Steve: And one didn't work out.

Pete: Now it's a classic image that's even been ripped off. There's club in London that uses it to advertise.

I guess the question is: Does that design aesthetic derive from art school, or from the vibe of the punk movement?

Pete: It was about being intelligent about what you were doing. I mean, look at all the Sex Pistols' art work, it's really classy and choice. To be in the club you had to. . .

Steve: I mean, Malcolm Garrett was an art student down the road. He came down and said. . .

Pete: It's about enfranchising people, you see, to be active participants in their own culture, rather than just be passive consumers. The DIY thing was about that and not about going into a store. . .

You've even said, Pete, that one of the big things about punk rock was the idea of social obligation. Is that what you mean by bringing in people from all walks of life into the band's world?

Pete: It was like, just because you liked doing it, you could get away with doing it. You didn't need any qualifications. There was always this idea that to be a musician you had to learn and things like that, but you don't. It's just fun to do. I mean, I think that the half of the audience not singing along is missing half of the fun. I mean the real enjoyment I have is the playing and the singing along. I mean, that's why I enjoy it. And if people sing songs, it's fun to see them. But most people are like, oh no, I can't sing them, so I'll go see Celine Dion and give her my hard-earned money and listen to her, because she can sing, and I can't.

Is that what you meant when you've said, "Punk rock was a like a big bang. So many things would not be the same if it weren't for punk. It gave everybody the idea that they couldn't simply just do it, play music."

Pete: Or pick up a tape recorder and just ask people questions.

Steve: In the old days, a guy would go into the toilet, come out with a sheet of paper and say, "I just started a fanzine."

Like Sniffin Glue?

Steve: Yeah, that was the early punk excitement. People thought, I could do something, you know, whether it was writing a fanzine or being a photographer or artist or anything.

Pete: Because these people would interview you, therefore you'd be the subject of the thing, and therefore people would want to buy the magazine or fanzine. It's got the interview, so it's a genuine thing, but it's just whipping up froth, because there's actually nothing really going on except for the interest that you are generating. And you're doing the other thing by being in a band and playing gigs and this other guy is going to interview you for his new fanzine, which he just decided to start now, and then he goes and Xeroxes them and then goes down to the club and sells them. Then all of a sudden things are starting up then, and that's what happens when people start going, I want to do this, and there's nothing really stopping me. There's nothing really going on, there's still the same vacuum, the same space, but it depends on how people are thinking, and if people think they are doing something of worth and creative. . .

So, are your ideas today as a band any different than on the White Riot tour?

Pete: Um, I guess. I mean, in terms of our attitude.

The Buzzcocks really inspired and began to really supply an alternative to the mainstream music industry, but beyond your impact on British pop culture, do you think you left a lasting impression on how to do business on your own terms?

Pete: Like when we signed to United Artists, in the contract we kept control over the artwork and things like that. And Andrew Lloyd, who was the A&R guy, was happy to do that and accommodate that. He helped us to do what we wanted to do. So, he was part of process. That's why when he left, it became a little bit different—well, there was a decline in interest in the record business, because it's the people, how big they are, or how many shares they're worth.

That era has changed for the most part, for today; a label probably would not be so patient with artists, so easy-going, giving their artists so much license. What explains the change?

Pete: Because the public is still gullible enough that they . . . buy boy bands.

When you played the new record to major labels, they sort of shrugged their shoulders and said, this is not what we expected it to be. They said, oh, it sounds like the Buzzcocks. It befuddled you?

Pete: It's one of those things where you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't. I mean, there was one bad review I read, and part of the idea was, because this record sounds like the Buzzcocks, we've in some ways chosen not to evolve.

Which are the same

things they have said about AC/DC and the Ramones.

Pete: Perhaps we should have done a folk album. I mean, I don't know.

Steve: Well, it's sad to think that when Picasso was doing his paintings without bothering with what people thought about 'em, you're creating something. Then once it goes out into the outside world, it's left to them. In terms of record companies, right from the start we had to make our own record first. . .

Pete: We've had more control over that since we got back together, so we just license it to the record companies for seven years. So, afterwards, we still end up owning it.



So they can't hide the masters up on the shelf and say you can't touch them.

Pete: Well, there are CDs now!

(Everyone laughs)

Steve: It's different, because you don't have to mess around with two-inch tapes.

"I am inspired by everyday life, and I don't believe you have to have extraordinary experiences to share with people," is what you've said Pete. Who was your model for that writing style?

Pete: Well, my girlfriend in Brazil and I had a row and I had to go in the studio to do a vocal for a track and on the way to the thing, I wrote about that. It wrote itself actually.

That kind of impulse has remained unchanged for the last two and half decades?

Pete: Yeah, well, like the last song we did on the album, called "Morning After." The night before I was in the studio and was supposed to do the vocal on that track at night, but I had no words at all for it, and Phil came along with his girlfriend, so we split a spliff. I finally got back home and in the morning I went out to get my hair dyed, and I am sitting there waiting for the dye or bleach to take, and I thought, don't show tonight, because I have no lyrics or anything. I thought, what should I write about, and all of a sudden, I was reading a magazine that was saying something about the morning after, and I thought, that's how I feel, and the sun was streaming in the window. I thought, what's the worst thing about waking up with a hangover—the sun streaming in—which became, "The sun's streaming through the window/ it's another day." It was quite quick, that one, to write itself. That's what I had, a hangover. I knew exactly what I needed to say.

But when Steve wrote "Sick City Sometimes," he references the skyscrapers falling in N.Y.C., right, which is extraordinary?

Steve: I just moved closer to London. I mean, I lived only a few stops from the center anyway, but I'm right in the center now, so my environment changed, and as I was walking around it was the alienation of the big city that I was writing about. And juxtaposed to that were the drug addicts and people with blank faces sitting next to the big man in the car, business men, running around in

There was always this idea that to be a musician you had to learn and things like that, but you don't. It's just fun to do. I mean, I think that the half of the audience not singing along is missing half of the fun.

London or any city, and there's the fine line between the rich guy and the office people and the bums on the street, including the danger and excitement of the city. So, I am capturing the alienation of the city, like, has your city forgotten about you? In the end, I throw the Twin Tower thing in to give it another twist and turn, like it's as fragile as that, because you have the power of the city and then the powerlessness of the people sometimes. Have people lost themselves? That's another theme in there.

It reminded me of William Blake's "London," when he talks about the streets marked by faces of weakness and woe.

Steve: So, yeah, it's like the city is sick and people are just getting on with their lives and forgetting who they are and that kind of thing. The other thing is like, have we been left behind in society too much? The Twin Towers thing as well, which is not a joke thing, but more like, in one fell swoop this whole thing could disappear in seconds, so it wasn't strictly about that, but I threw it in, in the end. There are many themes. It's like

when you read Shakespeare's plays, there are different themes and plots going on in them.

You once said that you were in a sub-heavy metal band, and punk rock was just a sped up version of that. In fact the quote is: "I began in a sub-heavy metal band, so punk evolved from sub-heavy metal played badly."

Pete: Well, if you think of the Stooges, that's all played badly.

But when Americans think of metal, they think of Judas Priest.

Pete: But I mean heavy distorted guitars; it's not too different, too dissimilar. And I think a lot of what passes for punk is just really heavy metal.

But the Buzzcocks have a very funk edge, especially with the early drumming.

Steve: The Buzzcocks have a very distinctive sound, that's our style. Like Glen Miller had his sound, the Buzzcocks' sound is a Buzzcocks sound. You can hear bits on other people's records, but they don't capture what we've got. It's very idiosyncratic.

And not very metal at all.

Steve: Well, he just meant the distorted guitars, and it's not that regimented thing of how heavy metal is played traditionally.

Pete: Take the two note guitar solo on "Boredom." It's the opposite of what a heavy metal solo is.

And supposedly you laughed all the way throughout it in the studio. Were you poking fun at heavy metal?

Pete: Well, yeah, and "Noise Annoys" is supposed to be poking fun at it, too. I mean, it sounds a bit like heavy metal, but it's not.

So is "Why Can't I Touch It" an ironic take on funk music?

Pete: No, that was because we went and had a Greek meal and bottles of... And that's when we started to record it, so it tends to have a laid back chorus.

Steve: But it's a tasty song, man. Incidentally, the other aspect of the Buzzcocks is you have two and half minute ones, the fast tunes and harmonies, then you have "Why Can't I Touch It," which is a great groove song. A lot of people like that as well. And also, "Moving Away From the

Pulsebeat" from the first album, that one went off into different avenues, as well. I like good songwriting and making it a stylistic thing rather than a one trick pony. Slaughter and the Dogs couldn't get anywhere near that kind of thing, you know what I mean. If you look at the overall canon of the Buzzcocks, there are a lot of things going on. We're kind of known for these three minute pop songs, but over the years, there are a lot of avenues we have explored along the way, still keeping it within the framework so people understand it. But "What Can't I Touch It" is a great song, and many people like that. Many people come up and say, "That's one of my favorites." In the studio, we were just jamming with each other back and forth, and there was no certain end, so it was like, OK, let's stop now. Like he said, we'd been out for a meal and were a wee bit drunk, and were just sort of like, we're backing into the chorus now. So, that one was exciting, because of the spontaneity.

Steve Diggle said in Sniffin Glue that originally the Buzzcocks got



together because they were tired of "clever flashy" bands and wanted to write about "boredom" and "supermarkets." Yet, early on, **Sounds** wrote that the band was "boring and unimaginative"? Is this the way Devoto felt when he departed?

Steve: Well, yeah, there were people like Yes doing half an hour songs that took one side that were about mushrooms in the sky and stuff.

Or Genesis?

Pete: Genesis, oh yes, and anything to do with Phil Collins.

Steve: You got to remember it was coming up to a million on the dole in Britain. It was a barren climate, nothing really happening and exciting for the people of that generation. You had all these bands and it was getting a bit tiresome, so when the punk thing started, it ripped up through the air and split the atom and it exploded, you know. It gave you something relevant to the time, really.

Would the band have gotten together if not for the Sex Pistols show at the Free Trade Hall?

I thought, what should I write about, and all of a sudden, I was reading a magazine that was saying something about the morning after, and I thought, that's how I feel, and the sun was streaming in the window.

Pete: Yeah. Otherwise, Steve would have been in the cabaret band that I saved him from! (laughs)

Steve: I was forming a band like the Who, with three-minute songs, because I had watched Yes and I thought, do you remember when the Who smashed their guitars with three-minute great songs, so I was going to form a band like that.

So, it was bound to happen regardless of that show?

Steve: There's a natural time in music, or in history, really, when there's something that seems to start to happen, but it all goes quiet for a bit, like the calm before the storm. Then things percolate, and people start thinking, get irritated, and say that something is missing from their lives. I mean, there was a big gap in the music, and there was nothing really happening that was relevant. Older people from the 1960s, like the Who. . .

Were you big fans of T. Rex?

Steve: Yeah, we liked T. Rex because he had distorted guitars and it's done very simply, but great songs. Like with the Sex Pistols, they built the bridge for everybody to walk over. You had the Clash with their kind of style, then there was our style, so it was sort of an individual thing. But we loved the tunes, and we still do.

How did you feel when Joe passed away?

Steve: We spoke the week before, a few days before. He was doing some DJing at a club, and I was going back to Manchester—I have a son from a relationship—and I said Merry Christmas to Mick Jones, and within two days I was driving back from Manchester and I heard the news. I couldn't believe it. I dedicate "Autonomy" to him since we started seven weeks ago back in Australia. I dedicate "Autonomy" to him every night because I went to see him once, and he said, "You wrote 'Autonomy,'" and gave me a hug. He said, "I like that song." Before it starts, I always go, "This one's for Joe Strummer." But he meant a lot, because I love the Clash, you know. That's who we started with, with the Pistols and the Clash; they were really the nucleus of the thing. It does mean a lot, and it's like losing an older brother.

Pete: He was very nice.

Steve: Not only that, but they were inspirational in their way, they were fantastic. They were what we're about, as well, in a different way, but we started off in the same creative well. So, he was very important. Joe Strummer was such a crucial part of the punk thing, so he's sadly missed, greatly missed. They were the best, the whole time. He's a legend.

After Devoto left, Pete, would you have let the Buzzcocks go, and joined up with Keith Levine?

Pete: No, not seriously.

But Bernie Rhodes did call you about it a couple of times.

Pete: Well, called me once.

Why didn't you?

Pete: Too much hassle. That was before I got sick of Steve (laughs).

Steve: I got sick of you. We got sick of each other after years. We were taking too much drugs at the time and it was all getting a bit crazy; we spent five years solid in each other's pockets. So, it's like with anything or any relationship, you wake up in the morning and see each other, you go to the hotel and see each other, and on stage you see each other. It's the human condition, plus the fact that nothing lasts forever. It had run its course at that time and it was time for us to take a break.

Steve half-jokingly told Jack Rabin that "the 'Cocks generally take a Stalinist stance on the years 83-89 by simply erasing that part of the band's history (Flag of Convenience, Shelley's pop/dance music)," which is not unlike the Clash spending years trying to live up to Cut the Crap. Why is that period an issue at all, considering that it was a particularly creative and profitable time for Pete?

Steve: Unlike Stalin, the idea was half tongue in cheek. With that 1980s music, I was out on the edge for the most of it, because I thought it was redundant, like watching a guy with a synthesizer push a button. Plus, I had

another band and was having a great time doing that, as well.

But Pete's material for Homosapien was actually cut as demos for the Buzzcocks, but you brought in a 12-string guitar and a keyboard.

Pete: I mean, you put all the songs down on tape, and some work, and some don't, some work on the first try, and others work on another try.

You don't think a song like "Telephone Operator" could fit into the Buzzcocks set?

Steve: Why, when he did that under his solo name? We have a million songs, so what's the point of doing that? We've all done several things, and we could all bring stuff in. People say, why don't you do a Flag of Convenience song, but it's not Flag of Convenience, it's the Buzzcocks.

But why not to a crowd that would really enjoy it?

Steve: But why not play a Buzzcocks song? They'll go, "Why didn't you play. . ." Well, you know we have about 150 songs to choose from, and every night, someone says, why didn't you play that one?

Pete: If I play a Pete Shelley song, then I'm Pete Shelley, but when I do a Buzzcocks song, I am the Buzzcocks.

Steve: What I am saying is that people go, "Why didn't you play this one, why didn't you play that one?" If we started playing what people did as solo as well, there's going to be even less of Buzzcocks songs.

So there'd be just more room for complaint?

Steve: Well, yeah, it's hard enough trying to get through the set we do in terms of what people want to hear. If I start bringing in songs, then Phil could bring in songs, then there'd be two Buzzcocks songs in the set.

Pete: Well, originally "Give it to Me" was a Pete Shelley song. I did it as a single as well, and now it's a Buzzcocks cover.

Steve: Then we have a great new album and we'd like to sing songs off that and that's far more important than digging up all that stuff. That was a 1980s song, but this is the now stuff. It's far better to keep moving on you know.

Why do you think that the original wave of punk bands like the Vibrators, The Buzzcocks, and the Damned continue to tour and make good records, but the later generation of people they influenced, like Menswear and the Inspiral Carpets, have disappeared?

Steve: I know those Menswear guys. That Brit pop thing they claimed started in a club in Camden called the Good Mix, you know, as soon as they got signed, they got drunk and wasted every night. I said to them, you know, you ought to be careful, keep one eye on what you are doing. I think they thought they were pop stars.

Pete: It's good advice; you should have followed it yourself (laughs).

Steve: Yeah, but I still come up with the goods every night. I am not walking around Camden with my hands in my pockets.

Pete: Well, you know, it takes a lot of stamina and stubbornness to keep on doing it.

Phil: Oasis has kept it up.

Pete: They're also getting some checks in there.

So does Blur. But think of all the Creation bands that have disappeared.

Steve: There were millions of bands in the punk days when we started. When we started, there were about five bands, the Clash, the Damned, the Pistols, and all, and thousands of them came a couple of months later. Really, some of them were like joke bands, some were in it for a chance here and there, but it's like anything, some survive and some don't. I mean, those Creation bands made their contribution to it. Now, there are kids who walk around and say, my dad was in a rock band.

Pete, what does your son think of your being in the Buzzcocks?

Pete: I don't know. I pick him up at school sometimes and he'll say, "Is it true that you wrote a song called, 'Oh Shit'?" He seems more interested in the language I use rather than the songs.

Steve: Well, you would, too, at that age, you know what I mean. At 12, like with my son, it's like they see you as their dad, because you're close to them. I read about Paul McCartney's kids, and they don't know about his music either (laughs). It's one of those things.

Did you really visit Copeland's castle in France when writing some songs?

Pete: I did. It was good, like a week away in the south of France. It was an experience.

It's a full-on castle?

Pete: Oh yes, a chateau.

Steve: You should have heard the shit that came out of it, it was awful.

Phil: It was an exercise, wasn't it?

Steve: It was a musical workshop. You're better writing them at the bus stop, I'm telling you.

Pete: You get paired with one or two of the songwriters and your task is to come up with a song and see what you can come up with, which is a bit like sitting in the room and shutting the door. There are all these different rooms around the place, different buildings. It was quite. . . .

Well, that sounds perfect for Phil Collins, but for the Buzzcocks?

Steve: That's what I'm saying. That's why you never heard the song (laughs).

Phil: It wasn't really the Buzzcocks, but like. . . .

Steve: I don't know what it was, but it was an art workshop. To me, that's a bit pretentious. If you get in a room with a light bulb only, you soon figure things out a lot better than having three course meals. I'm sure he had a good laugh doing it.

Pete: There were some nice women, as well.

Steve: I still maintain that you have to grapple with it, in your room, when you're searching inside yourself and all that.

Pete: Two to three thousand.

Steve: We did two shows in a row there. But those shows were right for the time. It's just the journey, the way it goes. I mean, the fashion and the ways it's booked, and you know.

You take a Zen approach?

Steve: In a sense.

Pete: Past the first ten rows you can't see anything anyway.

Of all the Buzzcocks' covers, what did you think of the Fine Young Cannibals', which really exposed the song "Ever Fallen In Love . . ." to millions of Americans?

Pete: It was good, and it financed the band for a few years before we got a record deal.

Steve: He went to college with my brother, so when we had Spiral Scratch and the first records, my brother, when he'd come home, he'd take the records back and they used to listen to them. So I remember when he was on tour, he said, "We just did 'Ever Fallen in Love.'" He's also a neighbor of mine, so. . . .

Pete: He lives under his floorboards (laughs).

I didn't realize he had roots that went that far back.

Steve: Yeah, he liked the punk rock and all that sort of stuff, I think he had even been a roadie for the Clash, so he liked all that, but he's more of a soul singer. . . .

Pete: They used to sing it as an encore for their live show, and it didn't get to be on the first album, but then for the second album they were also doing a track for Jonathan Demme's "Something Wild," so they recorded a version of "Ever Fallen in Love," and the record company London liked it and put it out as a single. I saw Roland at a health food shop—he was ahead of me at the thing—and he said, "We just recorded a version of 'Ever Fallen in Love'" and London wanted to put it out. But in some ways, well, I usually find out that the people that like that song don't like that version. They like the Buzzcocks version. It's far superior.

Steve: I like it. The bottom line is that it shows what a great song it is by his doing it that way. It still works.

Like you said before, the songs take on their own life and have their own momentum. They walk away from you.

Steve: The Offspring did "Autonomy" last year, but it's very close to what we do. I don't know what the reason is. I haven't had the chance to ask him.

You have played with everyone from Subway Sect and the Cramps to the Lunachicks (their old bass player does Tony's tattoos), and even played with Nirvana, but if you could recall a memorable moment with some of those bands, what would it be?

Steve: The Clash White Riot tour. That was fantastic, really exciting. It was like when the magic was first starting, the whole punk thing. It was all

If you look at the overall canon of the Buzzcocks, there are a lot of things going on.

Pauline Kael once said that the love of country music is really "about longing for roots that don't exist." Is that the real appeal of punk music, in which one can recreate a mythic sense of the past that includes bands like the Who, which you mentioned earlier?

Steve: I don't know about longing. If you look at the Who, it's a great body of work that's exciting and influential, like, we must have been better than the Who is now. The same way that people think it must have been better in 1976. It wasn't that much different than now in terms of. . . .

Pete: It's better now, because people know who we are.

Would you prefer now to, say, 1978, when you were playing really large shows?

Pete: We have been playing some very large shows, festivals. . . .

Or opening for Pearl Jam?

Steve: It's all part of a journey.

Pete: They weren't that much bigger than the places we are playing. Now, there's more of a circuit, where there used to be 2-3 places, nothing steady.

How many people did the Rainbow hold?

unknown, and that was a fantastic tour. Then, the Nirvana tour was brilliant as well.

Pete: It's a party every night, and we're allowed to be the main guests, and there's drink, and bits of food to eat, and your friends come, and lots of people with their mates, and you go off to strange places in the middle of the night, and you've got a hotel.

Steve: The Nirvana thing was great because you had that pinnacle of things, it was on the way up for them, and it was a fantastic combination.

What do you think Curt saw that made him feel connected to the Buzzcocks?

Steve: Well, I figured he liked the music. He said it influenced him and stuff. I think he thought we were quite English and was trying to rival us up on stage. He was in the dressing room every night and we were in his. I presume he liked the music, otherwise I don't know. Personally, I don't know, but I did a bit of coke with him on the bus.

But you said that you didn't know how you got on the short list for Pearl Jam, although Eddie supposedly took you around to guitar shops in L.A.,

but you don't remember it.

Steve: You know what, he turned up a few days later after that guitar shop thing and this security guard said, "There's this guy named Eddie trying to get backstage," and we were just about to go on, and I told him, "Tell him to fuck off because I don't know anybody named Eddie." I couldn't remember him, but when I see him, we'll square it up, unless he throws me out into the garden (laughs).

Shane from the Pogues recently said the Clash were just bandwagon jumpers, because early punks—even if they wrote "IRA" on their shirts or flirted with fascist symbols—were not political. The Buzzcocks were often tied up with the Clash's inner circle, especially when they toured with Subway Sect and the Clash in '77. During those times, did it seem like Bernie Rhodes and the Clash were just opportunists? (Another case in point is when Bernie booked the Jam as the number two slot at places like the Rainbow, just like the Pistols had brought in the Damned along with them for publicity and audience pull, not shared respect).

Steve: I thought they were a great band, and it's very difficult to get across what you want to do sometimes. They generated their own world like we did. They had their style and image, they had what they wanted to say, and every Clash album sounded fantastic and inspired you, and it sounds like it came from those punk rock days. Unfortunately, I suppose this business is about fucking opportunities really. We're not like that, and I don't think they were like that. They said in Sniffin Glue that they sold out when they signed a deal to CBS, but otherwise what would you do, you wouldn't have all these albums. Sometimes you have to use what's there to get through.

Pete: But I suppose the main difference is, as far as I am aware, and as far as what they did and say, it was genuine. It wasn't like they were putting on an act or trying to be someone who they weren't or something like that. That's what those people were like 24-7. There was no show biz personality behind anybody who had to do with that.

People did say that when you got back together in 1989, it was the result of "legal posturing and clever marketing."

Steve: We go into this to make music, write songs, and play live. That's what we do. It might sound very simple.

Pete: It's what we can do.

Steve: It may sound very simple, but that's what it's about for us. We could have been twice as big if we would have sat down at the table and started marketing ourselves, but it's just not our business, that's not what we do. We just write songs and play. We haven't really designed ourselves to get to any particular point.

But didn't Devoto recently say that he didn't want to depend on his creative output for money? But Steve, didn't you worry that when your wrist broke in Greece that it might not heal?

Steve: I'd write with my mouth, I'd hum the tunes (laughs). As far as

What is Roland doing?

Steve: He is getting a band together again under the name Fine Young Cannibals.

Without Andy Cox and David Steele?

Steve: Yeah, but he's got permission.

Pete, is it true that you didn't learn to drive until you were forty?

Pete: Yeah, I didn't need to. I took the bus, or road the train. I am used to being driven around.

But what about the song, "Fast Cars"?

Steve: I had the chorus, "I Hate Fast Cars," but left the words at home; then he wrote the verse. He changed it slightly. But "Fast Cars," it wasn't exactly the speed of it, it was the symbolic imagery of the thing, you know. All these people in fast cars. They're usually pretty boring. It was symbol of all that really, because as you get older you're supposed to achieve a big car—the guys in the sports cars. It's a different kind of world, that stuff, you know, big flashy guys in cars, it's the nature of whose driving and who's in them. That was the thing rather than the speed. I've been in a car crash; you can see what speed does. The only speed I like to take is internal. Then I know where I am going and have control over the breaks.

Phil, the old rhythm section was called the most intense since the Who, so how hard was it to acclimate?

Phil: Actually, you're quoting Jack Rabin talking about Tony and me. Anyway, it was difficult.

In terms of just touring all the time?

Phil: Physically. Playing the way he played. He was like a big mechanic kind of guy.

It wasn't that natural for you?

Phil: I sort of morphed into it, but yeah, touring is something else. Playing the actual songs was quite difficult, the nuances of it, realizing what actually happens, or what you thought happened didn't happen, so you thought you learned the song, but when you sit back, you realize, it's not quite right, and you actually realize what went into the making of the song.

How long did it take?

Phil: About five years. Yeah. We did tour after tour and then did an album; then we'd tour, and then it was only after that that I really took stock of it and kind of thought about what I had been doing, and then realized that I needed to tidy it up a bit and make it a bit stronger. Yeah, I think with Modern we were playing together better; then again, on this album I think it has gotten better. But it just took a couple of years to click for me.

We're kind of known for these three minute pop songs, but over the years, there are a lot of avenues we have explored along the way, still keeping it within the framework so people understand it.

Devoto goes, he said that, we didn't. He did six gigs with us and then he left. There would be no Buzzcocks if he didn't do that, because he started it, then left. That's his problem really. I understand what he's saying. What he does now is work in a different field, some film company or something. For us, we're more organic in terms of that we can get down there and play and do the hard work of playing and the enjoyment of playing. In terms of Greece, it's one of those things. Anything can happen at anytime, like the Twin Towers or anything in your life. I was involved in a car accident when I was seventeen; my best mate died in that. We were just riding down the road. We was drunk, but going back to the music thing, I'm saying that's all we can do, and that's all we want to do as well. It did cross my mind. I thought "Fucking hell, one fell swoop can change my life completely." It did give me time to reflect over and think, well, in fact I sat on my balcony and listened to Roland Gift and said what if I can't do that anymore. I had plaster over my hand and a meal plate...

Pete: You were listening, going, "Please play one of my songs. Do a cover of one my songs." (laughs)

Steve: Well, no, because the Offspring had just done a cover.

As a drummer, when I play along to the first couple of records, the speed, syncopation, and swing can be a bit hard.

Phil: Speed is something you can get used to—you build up the strength—but yeah, it's getting the details that go with the way the vocals go, for the drums don't always go with the bass, because the bass is kind of busy... A lot of the bass drum goes with singing. It's not just behind and all flat. You kind of have to grow into it. Tony and me played for a long time together; it helps quite a lot to talk to each other. We kind of researched it. Yes, it's physically demanding, but you can grow into it if you study.

Not unlike filling in for the Who's drummer?

Steve: John Bonham had his own individual style, and when the Who goes on tour, I suppose it is hard to fit in with them—because he was a bit unorthodox, wasn't he?

Phil: You have to find a way of locking into it, because you play your way. You listen to records and realize it ain't really like that when it comes to recreating it.



Explored avenues: the cover of 1977's *Orgasm Addict*

So when you hear the Clash record with Terry Chimes and Topper Headon, they are like night and day, in terms of drumming. I mean, Topper had such rubbery arms. . . .

Phil: But the ideas were already there for him to build on, and that makes it a bit easier. He was like a session player, I mean he could play, so he hacked in there, but didn't have to make the ideas up. But I suppose around the time of "Tommy Gun," he was in control.

Because London Calling seems completely driven by drums.

Phil: Even more so, because of the diversity of the styles, which he was up for. He could play soul, and reggae didn't phase him. He was the rock they were allowed to experiment on.

Whereas the Sex Pistols and the Clash seemed to be devoid of a kind of sexuality for the most part. . . .

Steve: There was something sexual about the Clash and the Pistols.

Like what?

Steve: Not in the content, just in the way they are.

Like performers on stage. Song wise, where does the Buzzcocks' romantic edge come from?

Steve: I did more ideas with the social things and abstract things in some ways, though I did "Lover's Lies," but that was a joke because he was writing love songs all the time. He is more concerned with whether somebody is in love or loves him; I'm not.

Pete, did you write romantic poetry as a kid?

Pete: Why would I want to do that?

Phil: He studied electronics manuals.

Did you really?

Pete: I had to take my standard English four times, and the whole time I never took a driving test. I tried to learn to drive when I was eighteen but I failed the test, and instead of paying for more lessons, I used the money to buy guitar strings.

Steve: It's all part of the human condition. That's what we write about, really. There's the love angle, but there's other themes going on in the song as well.

Pete: Like disappointment, rejection, arguments, those sort of things.

(I bring up the American romantic side of punk, like Blondie and the Ramones; Pete Shelley injects Jonathan Richmond.)

Steve: A lot of people can relate to what you are singing in terms of that. Everybody's relationship falls to pieces. . . .

Pete: It's sort of a classic form, you know what I mean.

But it's that classic form that allows you to transcend 1976, versus the dated sense of a political song? Or you sing a song like "Autonomy"?

Steve: It's just saying self-rule. It doesn't go into any specific details of the time. That's why it transcends. Like "She's a Girl from the Chainstore," which is slightly inspired by the American book by Henry Miller called "Black Spring." You read the bit about his childhood at the beginning. He sees everyone on the street as a star, the junkies and pill-poppers. Forget Marilyn Monroe, forget James Dean, the street people are the stars; they are the characters, they have greatness to offer. That's a good thing, I thought, I'll make the chain store girl the star of the song, just a simple check out girl. And so that kind of thing is universal, that doesn't date, but also because there's also other bits in it, like I'm working class. The language spoken at home is different than the language spoken in the classroom. Some kids you got under-achievers, and some kids are over-achievers and all that stuff, so I threw that in as well. So, there's a load of things going into that one, but those things don't date. I am always conscious of writing stuff that is universal and slightly philosophical and is about the human condition and the nature of people, but also the plights of people: what we

are doing, the ideals you love. I said to Bruce Springsteen the other day—

Wait, wait, wait.

Steve: He's a Buzzcocks fan.

Did you see him cover the Clash on the Grammy's?

Steve: Yeah, it was fantastic, it was a good version. I said to him, it could have been shit, and you know, normally that Grammy think. It was well done. I was surprised. I didn't expect it to be well done. . . .

How do you know he is a Buzzcocks fan?

Steve: I spoke to him three days ago. The date before we got here (before New Orleans), I went to his gig and he was at the hotel, and I had met him before Christmas at another show, but when I met him, I said, "I am from the Buzzcocks," and he said, "I know Steve, I have some of the records at home." So, that really threw me. That was interesting.

Did he name a song he liked?

Pete: Yeah, "Have You Ever. . ."

Steve: He said he liked "Harmony in my Head."

He did write songs for both Patti Smith and the Knack; even "Hungry Heart" was meant for the Ramones.

Steve: His wife said she'd sing backing vocals on my next solo record. She said, don't forget me. It was good to meet him. He's got the song "Used Cars" on Nebraska. He says you feel like the biggest jerk in the world when you're pushing your car. Or you get in the car with your family as a kid and go on the road and the car breaks down, and you feel like the biggest jerk in the world when you have to push the thing back. That's the kind of thing. . . .

Or "State Trooper."

Steve: Yeah, that kind of thing he is writing about is quite important and interesting.

Pete: Is he bigger than me?

Steve: He's my height, but a lot taller in other ways (laughs).

Tony: But I can't imagine the Ramones doing it.

Steve: As one of their Spector type songs.

"Buzzcocks—The Complete History" was a No.1 book of the month at the Virgin Megastores. Did it surprise you that people wanted to read all the details of the band's history?

Pete: There weren't many details, really.

Phil: It disappointed me that there wasn't a critical book. It's just a list of dates.

What would you prefer instead?

Phil: Just some intelligent criticism.

Steve: You know, the relevance of the Buzzcocks, a bit more detailed.

More like the Last Gang in Town about the Clash?

Steve: Yeah, it was more like a timetable, that history book on us. You don't get to learn a lot except they were on tour in America, then they went to Sweden.

Pete: I want to know what happened on all the days where there are no entries, because I can't remember!

Steve: It is good as a reference, so you could see where we've been.

Pete: If it helps me, in later years I'll be known to carry a copy around with me.

Steve: I've got a book coming out called "Harmony in my Head: Steve Diggle's Rock 'n' Roll Odyssey." I just finished writing it.

Biography?

Steve: Kind of, it's sort of cultural. The guy helping me has written all kinds of books about Brian Jones, mod books, and all sorts of stuff. I used to meet up with him for a drink. He would just put a tape on and record all the stories and tales. It's kind of biographical, really. So, yeah, it's just like that, from the beginning to now. Mick Jones is writing the forward. It should be out any time now, in fact it should have been out a year ago. It should be available in the States. It's on Helter Skelter Press.

I missed the Sex Pistols at Randy's Rodeo in San Antonio (January 1978). I was 15 and had just gotten my learner's permit, so I couldn't drive there. I didn't know anyone who was going. I probably wouldn't have even gotten in. I was bummed. Now why I went to see Styx the next month, at Austin's City Coliseum, is anybody's guess. It wasn't a very satisfactory consolation prize. But the Sex Pistols. . . . That would've been a pretty scary event. I had recently gone to my first rock concert ever, Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Sex Pistols would've been quite a 2nd.

I didn't see a 'new wave' show until later that year, when the Talking Heads came to the Armadillo World Headquarters. It was a strange time, musically, and much has been written about it. Punk or new wave was gaining momentum and notoriety, but heavy metal and the prog monsters still ruled the day. I wasn't too picky in my early concert-going days. I liked some prog and some heavy metal.

But then I went to Raul's, Austin's notorious little punk dive near campus. That was different. That was a revelation. I could see the bands up close, instead of far away in a haze of smoke and lasers. That was pretty much the end of the big rock shows for me. I became a convert to the cult of punk rock. I'm just eternally grateful that laws were more lax then. I was in high school, had just turned 17, when I first went to Raul's. 18 was the drinking age, but it just wasn't all that strictly enforced.

I graduated from high school and, after a fun summer dedicated to punk rock, I took off for college in far north Texas, an hour and half north of Dallas. I wasn't about to go to UT (The University of Texas at Austin)—I saw UT as one huge frat house. Plus it was huge. I went to tiny Austin College in Sherman—2200 students, most of whom looked like hippies to me. I felt like I'd beamed in from the future. The punk future.

Within a week of moving into the dorm, I started a 'zine called Idle Time. It was a way to stay connected to the Austin scene . . . it was my love letter home. I made the long trip down I-75 and I-35 to Austin quite often, catching rides with friends or strangers or taking the Greyhound Bus, making pilgrimages to Raul's and Duke's Royal Coach Inn. But I also met the only other punk on campus—who just happened to have a car—so we'd make the much shorter trip to Dallas' Hot Klub to see touring bands like Mo-Dettes, Ultravox, and the Stranglers.

I'd been a photographer since the age of nine I think, when my grandmother gave me an ancient box camera, a very primitive thing. I graduated from that to an Instamatic, then to a 35mm Yashica Rangefinder, and later to a Pentax K100 SLR. But I'd never taken my camera to Raul's until I started Idle Time. I was a DIY journalist and photographer now. The first time I took my camera to Raul's was when the Psychedelic Furs came through on their first US tour, when hardly anyone had heard of them.

But from then on, I quite often had my camera at shows. I had a job to do. The Big Boys were especially supportive of my efforts; they made me feel like part of the scene, like I was contributing something. They were good that way. Very inclusive in what sometimes felt like an exclusive scene.

Idle Time was my main creative outlet. I loved cutting and pasting, the rub-on letters, typewritten or handwritten text, rubber cement, the whole DIY thing. It was sloppy and fun. I was never a perfectionist. I wish I'd been a little more careful about focus and exposure—but I didn't care then; any photo I took was just going to be photocopied anyway, so what the hell. It was just part of the collage that was Idle Time.



Black Flag at Liberty Hall in Dallas, March 1984



Black Flag at The Island in Houston, November 1981



Black Flag at Liberty Hall in Dallas, March 1984



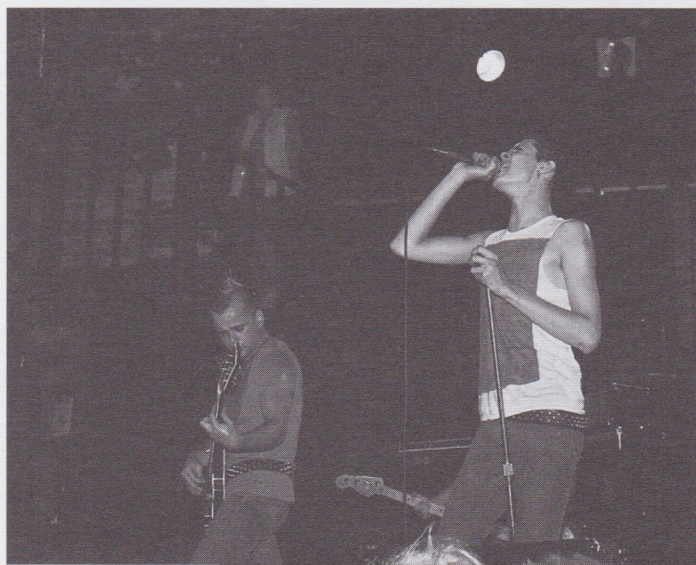
The Dicks at Studio 29 in Austin, January 1982

Gang of Four at Hot Klub in Dallas, September 1982





Siouxsie and the Banshees at Hot Klub in Dallas, October 1981



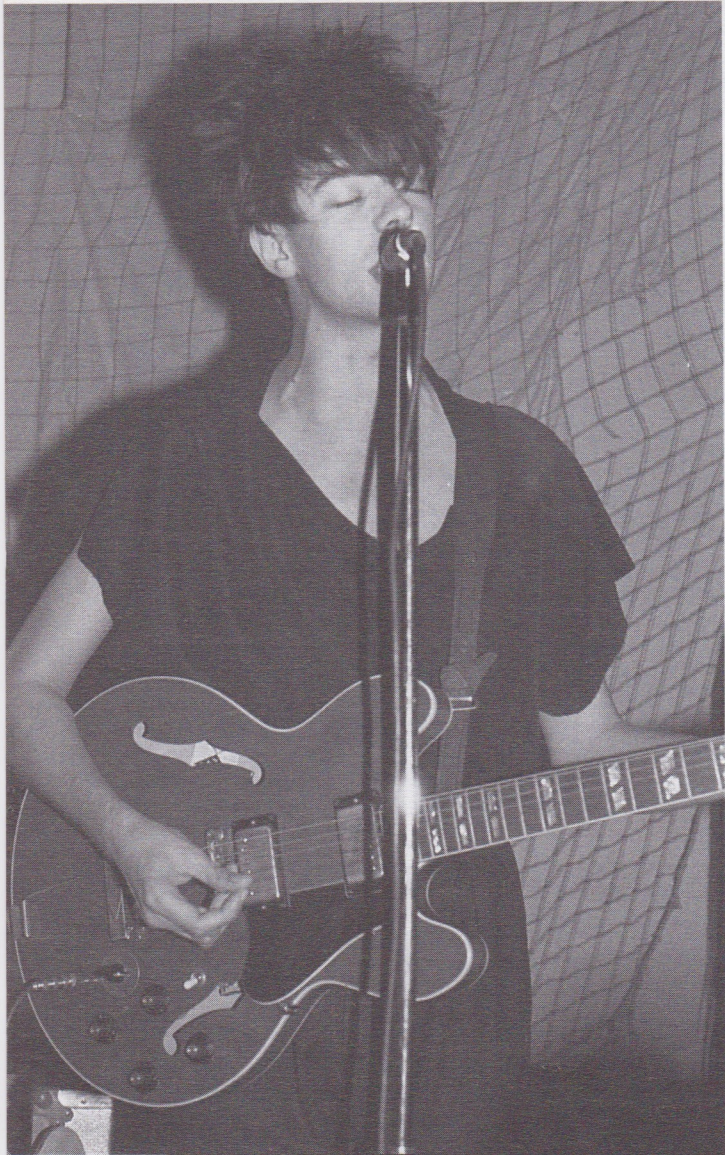
Social Unrest at Club Foot in Austin, August 1983



Scream at Club Foot in Austin, July 1983



Suicidal Tendencies at Club Foot in Austin, August 1983



Echo and the Bunnymen at Hot Klub in Dallas, October 1981



MDC at Club Foot in Austin, August 1983



Jodie Foster's Army (JFA) at The Ritz in Austin, June 1983



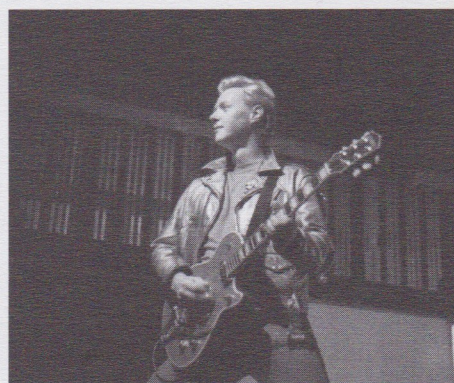
Circle Jerks at The Ritz in Austin, June 1983



DRI at Club Foot in Austin, July 1983

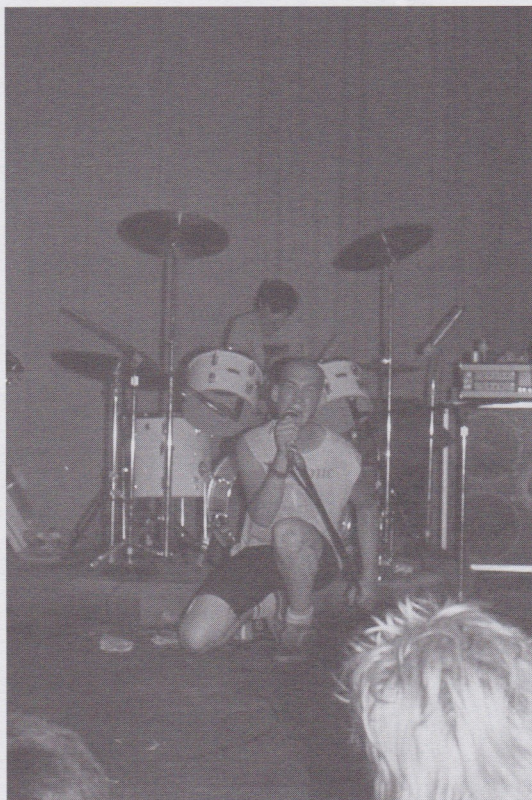


X at Club Foot in Austin, December 1980



Minor Threat at The Ritz in Austin, July 1982







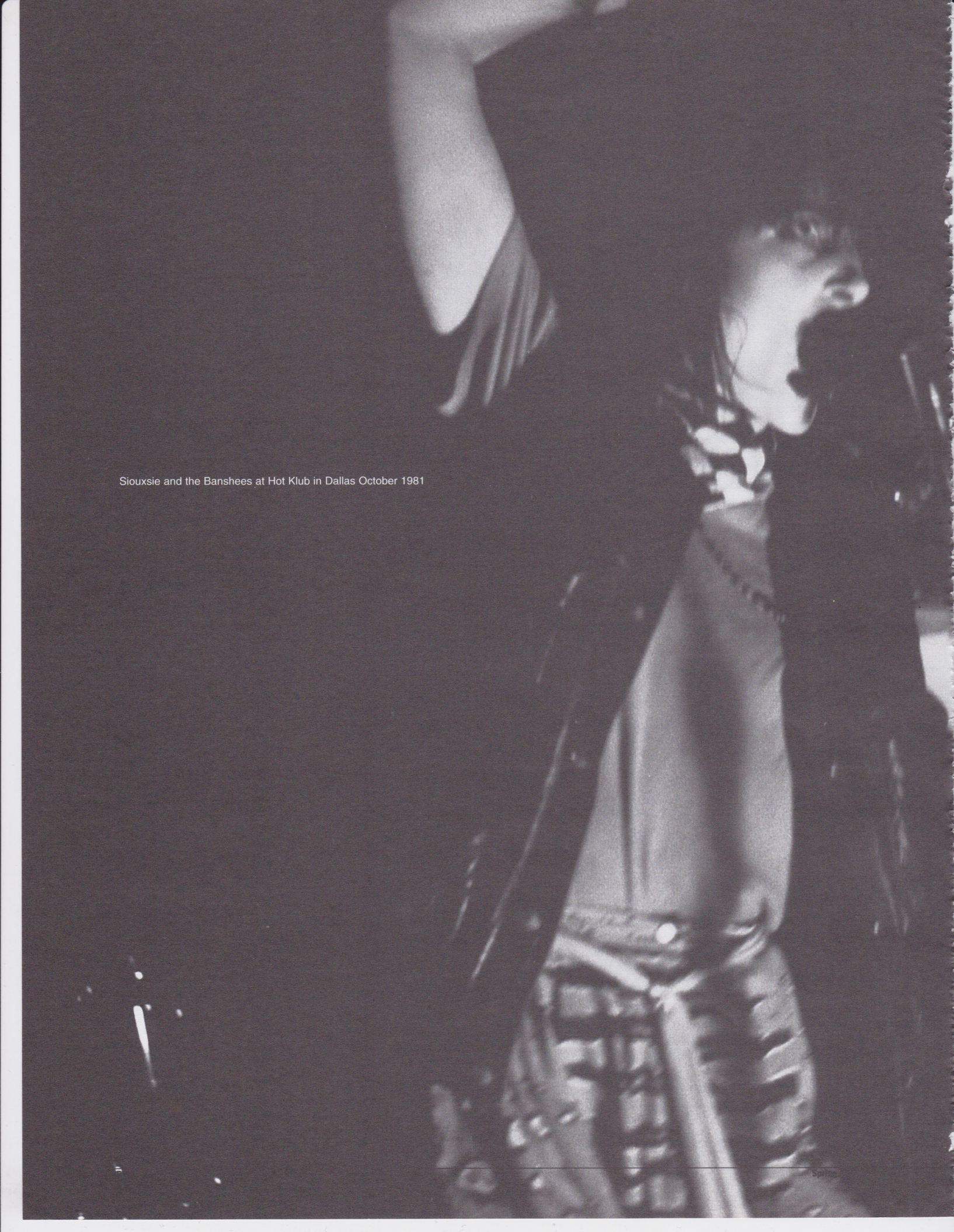
Psychedelic Furs at Raul's in Austin, October 1980



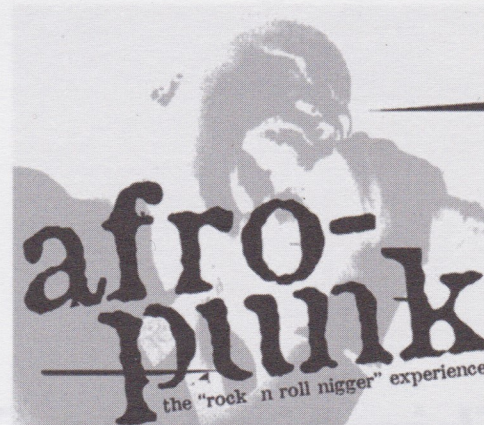
Really Red at The Texas Love-in in Austin, January 1982



Scratch Acid at Soap Creek Saloon in Austin, June 1983



Siouxsie and the Banshees at Hot Klub in Dallas October 1981



It's A Black Thing

by Ursula Arsenault

I went to see the first of several AfroPunk screenings in New York City on a hot and sticky summer night, not long after the sudden and heartbreaking death of my friend Matt Davis of Ten Grand, one of four people featured in James Spooner's documentary of the "Rock 'n' Roll Nigger Experience." I was looking forward to seeing Matt in full motion, as close to real life as I could, to hear his voice, his screams, the way I remembered him. I looked forward to feeling the unity I usually feel at shows or out with my crew of friends.

I entered a dimly lit room packed with attentive eyes watching and lips singing along to a backdrop of Bad Brains. I too kept my eyes focused on what were familiar images, flickering mirror-like on dark skin while the light washed me out. I knew that this was not about me. I knew it was about being black in the scene, and although I didn't expect it to be about me, or the other white punk rock kids like me, I did expect it to be for all of "us" in the punk/hardcore community. I watched AfroPunk from start to finish, absorbing the stories, the varying yet similar experiences of being black and punk. Not having had these experiences, I found myself feeling like an outsider, wondering what my place was in all this.

"I've gotten used to [being the only black person at shows]," writes Moe Mitchell, lead singer of CIPHER, on the AfroPunk.com bulletin board. "Of course, I wish there were more brothers and sisters in the scene, but you deal." While he may feel lonely at shows, Mitchell is not alone. In *AfroPunk: The Rock 'n' Roll Nigger Experience* the static numbers come

middle of a community I'd seen as unified. I started seeing black and white instead of people.

Emerging from his own issues as a black kid with a mohawk, Spooner sees himself in his subjects. Listening to their stories, he's hearing his own experiences retold. Providing unconventional role models for young black audiences, Spooner hopes that by showing his film, others will see themselves, too. "Black folks seeing other black folks doing different things is important," says an enthusiastic Spooner. AfroPunk stakes its claim by challenging typical representations of what is "Black," and banding together an army of outcasts who thought they were the only ones. In an effort to reach the "jiggy Negroes," female rocker Tamar Kali admits, "It's never hard to get a white audience. Ministering to our own community has always been the hard part. It's folks on my block that need to hear my music." The theme of the documentary, described by the AfroPunk website as "the story of outsiders disparaged by society . . . [who] find themselves marginalized again within their subculture of choice" is not unfamiliar territory in the history of society. We as human beings have all felt outcast, whether we are black, white, gay, straight, punk, straightedge, popular, nerdy or anything in between. So where do I stand in all of this? I stand where I choose to stand. Am I naive to think that as part of an open-minded, forward thinking "subculture," issues of racism do not exist? That we are not divided in countless ways? Yes. Issues of race cannot be denied in the punk/hardcore community, or in any community, but I am not discounted from the equation just because I'm a white girl. I watched AfroPunk as an

AfroPunk . . . draws an unsettling line down the middle of a community I'd seen as unified. I started seeing black and white instead of people.

together to find common ground as director James Spooner explores racial identity within the music, the lifestyle, and the movement called Punk. Among a myriad of performances by Bad Brains, Tamar Kali, CIPHER and Ten Grand, and exclusive interviews with members from Orange 9mm to Dead Kennedy's, AfroPunk captures the double consciousness of four individuals standing with one foot in the black community and the other in the punk/hardcore scene. Dedicating the documentary, "To every black kid who has ever been called a nigger. And every white kid who thinks they know what that means," Spooner weaves together common threads and emotion behind those leading a seemingly lonely existence in what is seen by the mainstream as a typically white lifestyle. AfroPunk succeeds at proving the mainstream wrong, but also draws an unsettling line down the

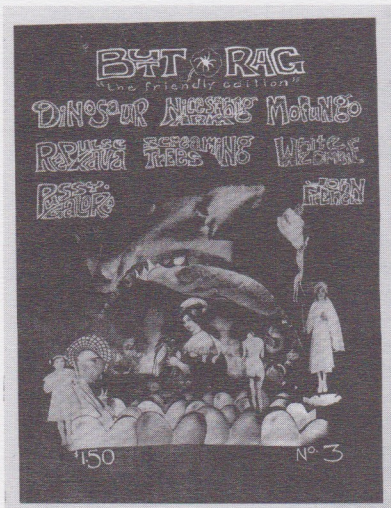
outsider, observing something I will never experience and can never know, but I can attempt to understand, and with understanding comes knowledge. And with knowledge comes change.

In true DIY style, self-taught Spooner has taken his film on the road, sometimes touring with bands like Wichita's Ricky Fitts, hitting several film festivals, campuses and punk houses across the country and creating quite a buzz along the way. So far, the film has had screenings at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Pan African Film Festival, and won the "Audience Choice Award" at the Black Harvest in Chicago. For information on screenings, visit www.AfroPunk.com.

This Ain't No Disco Zines from the 1980s

by Tim Hinely

In the most recent issue of Go Metric! (gogometric@yahoo.com) I did an article on my 10 favorite zines from the 1980s. This article, while a bit fuller in scope, will be similar to that one. I have lots of zines—many recent ones and still many more from the '80s that I saved—and this article will focus more on zines from the mid-to late '80s. I wish I'd been collecting them in the early '80s, but that was bit before my time (I did have one copy of Tesco Vee's Touch & Go but sold it for some pretty good loot on eBay. . . . Sorry, I needed the cash!). There were even more that I had that I don't know what happened to (moving will do that to you). This is certainly not meant to be a comprehensive look at every music zine that existed in the '80s; it's just me flapping my way at some of my favorites, specifically from the northeast and Midwest. Also, these are all zines that are now defunct (both **THE BIG TAKEOVER** and **SUBURBAN VOICE** are a few of my faves from the '80s, but they are still going). If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to write. Without any further ado. . .



The Midwest—Tim Adams, who now runs a label called 3 Beads of Sweat (and used to do Ajax Records and Mailorder), put out three copies of **THE POPE**. Tim was a bit of a Notre Dame-smartass: intelligent and sarcastic, and at the time usually went for the noisier bands of the day (Urge Overkill, Laughing Hyenas, Die Kruezen, etc.), much like myself. Also like myself, Tim wasn't so well-rounded in his musical tastes, but still drove it home with his reviews and commentary. . . . Two guys, Greg and Dan, with fire in their hearts and Naked Raygun records in their collections, managed three

issues of a zine called **THIS**. These guys, like Mr. Adams and myself, went for the sound of that day that all college guys were humming and whistling: Killdozer, Volcano Suns, Raygun, Defoilants, and the like. Wish they woulda kept this un' going for at least a few more issues but it was not to be. . . . And, of course, who can forget Peter Margasak's wonderfully named **BUTTRAG**? OK, horrible zine name, but the man knew what he was talking about (and still does—I think he currently writes for a major Chicago newspaper). I don't have the first one, but I have every other issue, and in addition to the indie music of the day, Peter was also a jazz aficionado (but I didn't read it for that info). I scoured his articles on/interviews with bands like Yo La Tengo, Pussy Galore, Scrawl, God's Acre, Laughing Hyenas, etc. After issue #4 he went to newsprint and got even more into jazz but then ended his run after issue #7.



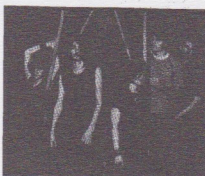
Scott Sendra lives in Philly these days and has a band called Down MF (that has been going w/ assorted lineups for years), but from the Spring of 1988 to the Summer of 1989, he and a buddy named "Sonic" Tom Deja did a zine called **BONE DANCE** out of their messy Michigan apartment (dunno if it was actually messy but hey, it sounded good). They, too, followed in the footsteps of their unkempt brethren, and their ears perked up to the sounds of bands like Dinosaur Jr., Soulside, The Didjits, Nice Strong Arm, and, one of the Great Lake's state's most unsung bands, Angry Red Planet. The

Bone Dance guys had a good "I'm right" attitude, and I'm glad to see the attitude that basically Tesco spawned carried on 'til at least the end of that decade that began with ol' dickhead himself, Ronnie Rayguns.

The Northeast—People know the name Gerard Cosloy as the guy who co-

PEBBY GALORE---Open Wide

Pussy Galore - **Open Mike**
Pussy Galore interviewed at Gerard & Julian's, one hot Sunday in June. Pussy Galore used to live in Washington D.C., now she lives in Nashville, Tenn. They have one kid, **Rock** who **Rock** out now on their own Show **Records** label, and their debut 7" EP **"Feel Good About Your Body"** came out this past January. Boistered by new drummer **Bob "Tex-Sonic" Bert**, Pussy Galore are ready to start entertaining like ATC rock fan parties, those that frequent the Cat Club & Lil' Albert. Their first NYC gig is Tuesday August 10th at the rock capital of the East Coast, the **Pratt**



PUSSY GALORE
Cristina, Jon, Julia, Neil and Bob
(photo by shellah)

[illegible][illegible]

owns Matador Records, but a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far, away, he not only ran Homestead Records (Big Black, Naked Raygun, Sonic Youth, Squirrel Bait, etc.), but he also published his own zine, **CONFLICT**. The zine started, I believe, in the late '70s, when Gerard was a Boston-area teenager, but continued on through 'til the early '90s. If Gerard reviewed your record and didn't like it, look out. No one (and I mean no one) could be a harsher critic than Gerard (Sample review of a Dead

Milkmen record: "Stars of the 9th grade talent show and you know the drama coach fucked every one of them. The Dead Milkmen can eat my fuck"). The zine was as funny as it was caustic, but Gerard was a music fan first and foremost, and I found out about many of my all-time favorite bands from reading Conflict (Americian Music Club, Scrawl, The Gibson Bros., etc.).

Mike McGonigal began his zine **CHEMICAL IMBALANCE** in Florida before moving to the Big Apple in the mid '80s. I jumped on the bandwagon for issue #5, and his zine was a nice mix of challenging artists (i.e. drawings, photography, poetry, etc. and music). Each issue came with a 7", and some of his more interesting articles/interviews included: Television Personalities, The Chills, Scratch Acid, Daniel Johnston, Beat Happening, and tons of artists I have never heard of. Mike published his last issue in the early '90s out of Tennessee and currently publishes a zine (more like a book) called **YETI**.

I never did meet Erickson, but this young guy from Connecticut published his zine CUT, from the mid '80s until the early '90s, and he definitely had his finger on the pulse. He studied the like of Bangs and Meltzer, and got guys like Tim Stegall and Fred Mills to contribute. He liked indie stuff as well as metal, but I mostly remember his pieces on The Bastards, Angry Samoans, Cop Shoot Cop, Lonely Moans, and an amazing interview with Lou Barlow, who tells the whole sordid story of his life in Dinosaur. I have no idea what

Steve is doing now, but I'll bet he's writing for someone.

Herb Jue was a college professor (I think?), and a buddy of Jack Rabin's who did his own zine called **THE KVINDE HADER KLUB**. The writing (or typing) was really tiny (for example, issue #4, from Feb. 1988, was 15 cents and just one sheet of paper folded over with tiny handwritten reviews on the whole thing, front and back). Herb liked a good mix of noise and pop and he always added a good dose of humor to his writings (something not lacking back then).

The man who is Smog, Bill Callahan, eeked out 6 issues of his classic '80s

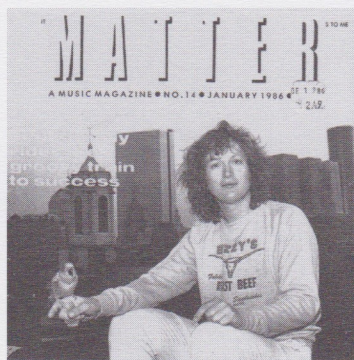
DiSASTER

issue number 4 SUMMER 1987 \$1.25



HALO of FLIES

Sebadoh, Volcano Suns, The Embarrassment, Urge Overkill and other instrument-playing miscreants. . . . A 7" came with each issue of Art Black and Monica Dee's (he wrote and she took the photos, or as he once said, "she shoots, he dribbles") **AWAY FROM THE PULSEBEAT**, and I don't know how many issues of this came out, but I have two (and that might have been their only ones). They liked noise and pop: Redd Kross, Celibate Rifles, feedtime, Killdozer, and lots more (plus, in the Winter, 1987 issue, in the live reviews section, there's a photo of a totally bloody and gross G.G. Allin laying on top of a person. Zoinks!).



Elizabeth Phillip and her gang of hipster cronie contributors (Gerard Cosloy, Steve Albini, Byron Coley, Ira Kaplan, etc.) put out this amazing glossy mag called **MATTER** from outta her Hoboken, NJ apartment. Dunno whatever became of her, but in the issues I have, from 1985-86, she expressed her love for Sonic Yoof, Green on Red, Three O'Clock, Redd Kross, and issue #14 had a great piece on the city of Boston, yadda, yadda, yadda.

God, I'd do *anything* to coax FLESH & BONES editor Jeffo outta retirement and do his zine again. It was the greatest! As I mentioned in the *Go Metric!* Article, it was like Mad magazine meets Creem meets Tiger Beat, or something. It was so classic with just the greatest graphics. Jeffo loved the

heavier stuff: Das Damen, Dinosaur Jr., Soundgarden, St. Vitus, and many more. He would have things like a Redd Kross pin-up, and then the next page have a pinup of Jim Dandy (from Black Oak Arkansas). . . . Another fine zine outta my native NJ (Flesh & Bones was based in NJ as well) was **SPORADIC DROOLINGS**. Editor Dave Burokas was a total workhorse who reviewed records out the wazoo (kinda like **DAGGER**), and at least part of Dave's focus was Australian bands who were still unknown over here: The Hard On, Died Pretty, Celibate Rifles, etc. were all championed in the pages of S.D. . . .



(Tim Hinely still publishes his long-running zine DAGGER. For a copy please send \$3.50 to PO Box 820102 Portland, OR 97282-1102 . If outside of the U.S., please write first for price to daggerboy@prodigy.net.



Nasty Nasty Nick Cash Short Cuts with 999

I recently read that Pablo was one out of two hundred auditioning drummers that the Clash chose to replace Terry Chimes early on, yet he ended up in 999. Do you remember how that happened?

The way I remember this was that 99 auditioned about 200 drummers for 999, and Pablo was the last one that walked through the door. Some of the drummers who turned up for the 999 auditions included John Moss (later to be in Culture Club), Dolphin, (Tom Robinson band/Stiff Little Fingers) and we did speak to Terry Chimes about doing some gigs with 999. As far as I know Pablo was the first drummer in the Clash and was in the same class at school as Joe Strummer and a life long friend.

A recent Elvis Costello Biography said that a lot of agents, managers, and publicists practiced "professional forgetfulness" when promoting bands like the Police, the Clash, the Stranglers and even 999—bands that were made up of older guys, but were aimed at the youth market. Was Punk rock not a youth movement at all?

Well, at 24 years of age, maybe I was a bit too old for the youth market. After all, we were supported by Eater with Andy Blade, who was only 15 years old at the time!!

By the way, did Kilburn and the Highroads dress up as women, or was it another band with Nick and Ian?

Myself and Rod Melvyn, the piano player with Kilburn & the High Roads, for a laugh used to dash back stage and dress up as women with full

makeup—dresses, high heels, etc., and suddenly reappear as women for the encore. It was great fun to watch the expression on the audience's faces.

People supposedly told 999 not to go to America, not to sell out, or at least that was the general attitude. Why did people believe that touring America would tarnish the band?

999 were extremely critical of the people who told them not to go to America—all our fans said go—and said that they would go if they had the same opportunity. We went—it was fantastic—and in my opinion, the people who came to see 999 were no different anywhere in the world, and I'm proud of the fact that our music broke down barriers.

The band designed the package for the first record themselves, unlike most bands at the time (Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks), who had designers shape their image. How was the band able to control their art?

I went to Art school and studied fine art taught by Geoffrey Rigden, Terry Frost, Stass Parastos, and Ian Dury. This gave me a good sense of the visual image. Also art school was a great place to go to experiment with your dress sense.

Is it really true that British radio at the height of the band's popularity suppressed the band's songs, or tried to? How so?

999 wrote "Homicide," which was nothing more than a detective story set to music. British radio at the time were so scared of anything to do with punk corrupting the consciousness of the nation that it deemed Homicide too



evil to play on the radio.

"This Is Just a Lie" was about the scandalous behavior of undertakers and crematoriums in England during the late '70s, while **English Wipeout** is about nuclear annihilation, but most 999 songs steer away from politics and social issues. In a time of "Anarchy in the UK" and "London's Burning," why did 999 choose to write about the boys in the crew, women, and Hollywood?

999 wrote a song called "Feelin' Alright with the Crew." Is this the song you are referring to? The song was about empathy with the audience, tribalism, and just having a good time. Women—well there's nothing quite like them, is there? And Hollywood—because we visited the place and played gigs in the Hollywood area and wanted to write about its madness and crassness.

What was 999's impression of Punk in America—a silly caricature of London's scene, or was it a whole different attitude and style?

999's impression of the punk scene in America was that it was fantastic and is just as fantastic today. Those U.S. audiences have plenty of style, man!

I always thought that 999 was a joke, an upside-down version of 666, but I just read that 999 is the emergency services phone number in England. Were the band ever threatened by the authorities over the use of the number?

We were never threatened by the authorities over the use of the 999 emergency services number. However, it was great to give the cops a button with 999 on it when we were stopped for speeding—we were let off a few times with that one.

After a few commercial disappointments in the early '80s, the band self-released Face to Face (which they hadn't done since 1977's "I'm Alive") and set up their own merchandising company.

We had parted from our management and record company, Albion Music, so we had to start out on our own again, and we decided not to have a manager, so it seemed natural to set up the Labritain Label and go at it again. We decided to go back to our roots again both musically and by doing a lot more gigs.

Nick has known Wattie from the Exploited (still touring) since he was 15, yet does he ever feel that hardcore bands like GBH and the Exploited destroyed the market for an older generation of bands like 999, and were maybe one reason the band distanced itself and liked to be called New Wave when they talked to people in America?

No, there was room for everyone, and if anything, those bands helped keep the music alive. Obviously there is and was a bit of a thing about the first and second generation bands of the time, but that now seems unimportant. A lot of people in the States turned up to see 999 on our last tour of the States in April 2003, there were the people who saw us the first time around as the New Wave, plus all the generations onwards with kids as young as 12 years old into our music!

Nick has mentioned that "Time" by Richard Hell is one of his favorite songs (it was covered by the Minutemen/Mike Watt here in the States), but what are some of his other faves?

"Blank Generation" by Richard Hell, "Search and Destroy" by Iggy Pop. "Mustang Sally" by Wilson Pickett.

Nick's favorite 999 song back in 1986 was "20 Years," but right now, if you had to choose three of his fave 999 songs, what would they be?

"Homicide," "Nasty Nasty," and "All of the Days."

Arthur has been in the band for years now, but once played with the Lurkers. How did you know he was right for 999?

I'd known Arthur for years. He was on the same management and record label and had toured with 999 as support of his band Pinpoint.

Like Charlie Harper, you likes to fish, as evidenced by the photo on the back of "Biggest Tour" of a fish that ended up as a trophy on his wall. What exactly is so alluring about fishing?

I went fishing once to have a day out with the band when we had some time off in Miami. I caught a 584 pound Bull shark. After such a big successful catch I haven't felt the need to go fishing since!

Can you tell me the story of the record steelhead trout catch? Is that the fish in the photo? From what I understand, you waltzed in, grabbed the biggest prize in fishing, and waltzed out—much to the chagrin of local fishermen!

That was the Bull Shark I was telling you about as regards the steelhead trout catch that was Pablo, who had bought a telescopic fishing rod while on tour in the States. He decided while he had an hour off before sound check to try out his new rod down at the river; he cast out and, to the amazement of the local fishermen, he almost immediately hooked a record-breaking steelhead

trout. Of course, the local fishermen wanted to know all about his rod and the fishing technique of this English newcomer who had bagged the fish they had been trying to catch for ages. Pablo had the hotel chef cook the trout up for his dinner later that night—I think it was the best fish he had ever eaten!

Mark P from Sniffin' Glue once wrote that "999 reeked of being a bandwagon band & never really convinced me of their punk credentials." Looking back now twenty-five years, are you satisfied that the band can tour to sold-out, enthusiastic crowds in America and England, while people like Mark P have drifted into obscurity, mostly disliked and ignored?

Yes, I am pleased that we are going on 26 years later and hope that we can continue. I have recently worked with Mark P to raise money for charity and he's not a bad bloke!

Holidays in the Sun

VICAR ST., DUBLIN

17TH.18TH.19TH MAY 2002

in association with TOXIC PROMOTIONS

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| FRI 17TH MAY Doors open 4 p.m. | STIFF LITTLE FINGERS | BROKEN BONES | THE DANGERFIELDS |
| | 999 | Blood or whiskey | THE RESTARTS |
| SAT 18TH MAY Doors open 1 p.m. | COCKNEY REFLECTS | VICE SQUAD | MAJOR ACCIDENT |
| | PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES | COITUS | STEAM PIG |
| SUN 19TH MAY Doors open 1 p.m. | ANTI-NOWHERE LEAGUE | G.B.H. | SKINT |
| | SPLODGE | THE CRACK | COLD WAR |

TICKETS: available at Sound Cellar, Comet, Road Records, Mero's Secret Book & Record Store. Ltd amount at Ticketmaster or S.A.E. (with NO booking fee) to: Toxic Promotions, Suite 2, 3 Blessington St, Dublin 7

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In the Neutron Aftermath The Weirdos

Supposedly, you were in the audience for a 1973 Iggy Pop show when Cliff drew a huge magic marker "X" on Iggy's chest, and he didn't even blink. During that heyday of glam and pre-disco, why did you identify with Iggy, and what else were you attracted to?

We were in constant pursuit of rock music that possessed the sound of electric guitars played passionately and aggressively. James Williamson delivered the goods with a ferocious style the likes of which we had never encountered before. In 1973, Iggy and the Stooges were the closest thing to what is now (2003) defined as being "punk rock." That same year they released the Raw Power LP. It features the song "Search and Destroy," which, by my estimation, stands unrivaled as the ultimate example of proto-punk. It should also be noted that Iggy and the Stooges were not highly regarded by the mainstream media at the time. But that made no difference to us youngsters.

Last weekend, Peter Case corroborated the story from "We Got the Neutron Bomb" when he talked about inviting the Weirdos, totally drummer-less, to play with the Nerves at SIRS studios. He told me that your future drummer was actually in the audience, yet I found out that the band played a few more shows without one. Now, seeing that the band went through four drummers, were those shows omens or foreshadowing the tension between the band and drummers, since really, the band began without one?

Actually, we love all our drummers. The fact that the Weirdos' bullpen of drummers are all superb players meant that their availability sometimes presented scheduling conflicts. As for playing without a drummer, in the beginning, we were four guys just kickin' around some ideas for tunes. Inspired by the release of The Ramones' first album, we set out to explore these ideas, intent on forging our own version of rock 'n' roll. Much to our surprise, we got results quickly, and after several weeks, we had compiled an entire set's worth of songs. The obvious thing to do next was adopt a name for ourselves. The Weirdos was our unanimous choice and it had a unifying effect. We had every intention of finding a drummer, but as one might imagine, it would be difficult to find a competent drummer with the willingness and courage to explore uncharted territory like the musical bombast we were developing. Peter and The Nerves asked us if we would be interested in playing a show after hearing us through the wall of our rehearsal studio. When we stated that we wouldn't be ready until we had a drummer, they seemed perplexed. They were convinced that they had heard drums. When we assured them that drums were a figment of their imagination, Peter chimed, "Play the show anyway! What do you need drums for when it sounds like you've got them already?" We said, "Yeah, what the fuck, let's go for it!" For our second show we actually had a drummer rehearsed and ready to go. But when Cliff jokingly said, "we'll be lucky if fifteen people show up," the drummer announced that he was getting nervous from a "bad case of stage fright." We spared him an uncertain fate and fired him right before the sound check. Survival of the fittest, that's the way it's gotta be!

John Harrington, in his book from 2002 called "Sonic Cool- The Life and Death of Rock 'n' Roll," waxed historical by suggesting that the Weirdos' songs, like "We Got the Neutron Bomb," found an audience because "the new kids welcomed carnage of any kind as a kind of liberation from their dull shopping mall extremes." Do you agree, but if I may point out, there were very few kids in the scene at all, minus people like Middle Class and The Extremes (Youth Brigade), because most people were actually older, right?



Older compared to what? Sesame Street? The original Hollywood punk rockers of 1977 ranged in age from about 17 to 27. There may have only been a few "kids" in the scene, but to refer to the rest as "adults" would be a misnomer, to say the least.

Ian MacKaye from Minor Threat once told me that the band made singles because they never imagined they could make albums, something only major labels artists like the Dickies and Jam did. Harrington insists that bands like the Weirdos "made the 45 a viable rock 'n' roll medium in a time dominated" by FM long play by Yes and Zeppelin, but why do you think the Weirdos aimed for the 45?

The Weirdos were never as calculating as we may seem to appear in retrospect. EPs and 45s were simply quicker to produce and they kept the wind in our sails. An album was something we were always shooting for.

Why exactly did the band crash the Damned in-store at Bomp? Was it an impromptu "happening," a situationalist act, or something else?

All of the above, plus the fact that we felt it was our duty, what with all them furrinerzz comin' to town. We were really more interested in flirtin' with Debra Harry and drinkin' free beer than anything else. As you can imagine, things got a little out of hand. It was a lovely a Saturday afternoon, as I recall.

On the website for your label, the quote from Johnny Rotten, "The Weirdos were wonderful . . . and original," from Slash #4 sort of sets the tone for the new release. Yet the Weirdos, themselves wanted to distance themselves from the English scene, and chose the term Weiridoism over punk early on. How did you actually feel about the Sex

Pistols, Damned, and Clash, all who played with the early L.A. bands?

In 1977, if you wanted to witness or hear punk rock in L.A., then the Weirdos were your ticket to ride. For the first year or so, we served as a sort of local surrogate Pistols/Clash. In fact, we had our own full set of tunes well before the release of any of the initial punk rock records from Britain. However, I'd be a liar if I didn't admit to the fact that we were fans nonetheless. We just acted indifferent so as to maintain our cool.

Along with the Screamers, the other truly under-documented band of the era, was probably Crime, who I believed you first played with in July 1978 at the Starwood. Tony Kenman said the problem with the Screamers was that they were waiting for the deal that never happened. Would you agree, and would that apply to Crime also?

I would never presume to know what the Screamers or Crime were waiting for.



The new movie *Wonderland*, starring Val Kilmer as John Holmes, vividly links the gangland slayings that shook L.A. with the owner of the *Starwood*. Were you aware of the connection between punk and porn, and the darker side of drugs and guns that also underpinned it?

I was living in Laurel Canyon at the time. That, and the *Starwood* connection, made it all a little too close for comfort. Shady dealings seemed to be the order of the day back then.

Tony from the Dils told me, "I think the Weirdos were a better live band than we were. We tended to be hit and miss. The Weirdos were like a great punk rock machine." The question is: How did the band sustain the intensity of the live shows to such a degree that almost no one would argue with Tony?

Wow! I'm knocked out by that because the Dils and the Bags were my favorite bands from the scene. I must say, the Weirdos rehearsed relentlessly with an almost militaristic work ethic. Be all that you can be, in the Weirdos!

By the time *Condor* arrived, if I recall, Cliff only contributed synth parts and shared bass duties with Flea. Why was it so much, well, only a

partial reformation?

In '89, when we recorded *Condor*, we approached the session not as a band per se, but with more attention paid to serving the songs. We had a pool of musicians all willing to contribute unselfishly to the project.



Billy Bones from the Skulls has mentioned that punk has died or disappeared from time to time over twenty-five years, but for the last several years, whether due to the success of bands like the Hives and Bellrays, or shows like the Track 16 Forming exhibit and Class of 77 Flipside Benefit show, there seems to be a confluence between a sense of the old and new. As the new Weirdoes compilation hits the stores, how do you think younger people will envision it? Do they even have a context for it?

I must respectfully disagree with Mr. Bones. I contend that punk rock has never died. It's actually lived on in a

continuous unbroken line that can be traced back to its origins (wherever that is). Punk rock's relevance as determined by the mainstream media is something entirely different. It's also something I don't care to acknowledge because they've been wrong too many times before

KIP-XOOL'S QUESTION

Can you tell us a bit about how the "Adulthood"/"Skateboards to Hell" 7" came about and the idea behind it/content of the lyrics? (It's been described by collectors as "industrial grunt and grumble").

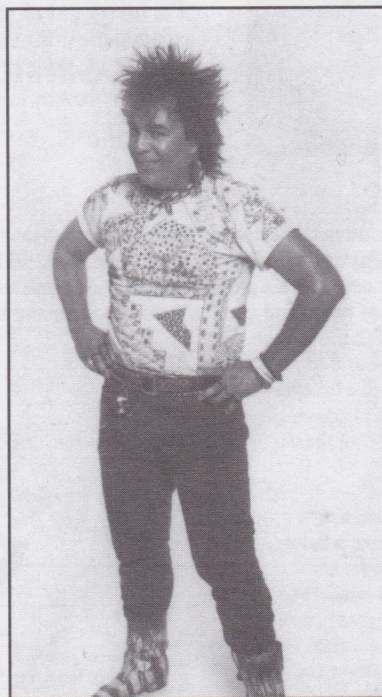
We were thumbing our noses at the record industry. It was actually intended to be more of a stunt than a serious artistic endeavor. Recorded one night in 1979 on a 4-track Dokorder at our Mom's house in Santa Monica using kitchen utensils, pots 'n' pans, and one Stratocaster. It was an attempt at proving that you didn't need a record label to put out your own record. "Adulthood" was an improvised first take, in the can as is. "Skateboards To Hell" with a deliberately skewed meter and a mutated rock riff that descends into a cacophony of feedback and racket. I personally walked the 45 through every phase of its production right down to picking up the records from the pressing plant. With the radio airwaves dominated by "easy listening," our aim was to counter it with what we called "hard listening." It was crude by design so as to offend the sensibilities of the old fart establishment that dictated what was or wasn't a "good sounding record." Whether we hit our intended target or not is beside the point. We had lots of fun making it, which has always been the bottom-line for The Weirdos.

WELLY'S QUESTION...

Do you think that recent books on the early L.A. scene like *We Got The Neutron Bomb* are accurate representations of what actually happened? How do you feel about your early scene finally being noticed and taken seriously by "music journalists" and the mainstream, after them purposefully ignoring it for 25+ years? And were you flattered, that that book in particular bore your song title as its title?

Frankly, we were disgusted by the use of our song title for that thing. And here's why. Cliff Roman not only came up with the title "We Got the Neutron Bomb," but he also wrote the music for the song, as well. One of the so-called authors of the book informed Cliff that they were going to use "We Got The Neutron Bomb" as the title of their book and that Cliff should also be aware that "You can't copyright a title." To add insult to injury, the so-called journalist not only failed to give credit where credit was due, but the name Cliff Roman is conspicuous by its complete absence from the book. Was this merely an oversight on the part of the so-called journalist, or was this a calculated and mean-spirited attempt to discredit Cliff Roman by means of elimination?

Punk Hoedown From the Sticks to the Streets



Pictures from Third Coast magazine in Austin, 1982

We were all just a bunch of skateboard "grommets" and "dwids" when we met at the local ditches in 1978. Groups of friends gathered to skate small pockets at local area hills, embankments, and ditches. The Central Austin, University of Texas area of Austin, was the most wacky, and that's where the Big Boys lived. There were several Gulf Coast surf style boys who influenced us with their "flow and carve," who went to U.T. We have the hills here, so high-speed suburban road runs were customary! There was the Pflugerville Ditch, the 15th St. railroad banks, the abandoned swimming pools at the Monkey Research Labs in Bastrop, plus many downtown parking garages helped spread the fun! Team Gerbil (we would shread!) from San Marcos or the Kerrville Ramp Boys would stay overnight and we would roll all night after some sick punk rock shows. The security guards almost knew our names at the 12th story parking garage downtown! When the Big Boys would go to California, we were accepted always into their circle, and luminaries like Tony Alva, Steve Caballero, Neil Blender, and Steve Olson showed us the finest that skateboarding was at that time. Tony Alva rode from Los Angeles to San Francisco with us for some shows, and we must have stopped at twenty different ditches. Fun city! Go see the movie Dogtown USA and check out Mr. Alva! Back in Texas the Zorlac team from Dallas took the Southern message out to the world. Jeff Philips, John Gibson, Craig Johnson, and Alan Guimon were ultra cool Zorlac Team Members who were "coached?" by Jeff Newton, the owner. The Big Boys had the first American skateboard band endorsed board thru Zorlac! I wish I could skate like I used to (pitiful as I was) as I am building a seven foot water ski "Battleship of Texas" skateboard. Look out Texas Hill Country, the Gravity Gorillas are here!

The Vomit Pigs from El Paso; the Butthole Surfers, Vamps, Chatterbox, Marching Plague, and Fearless Iranian from Hell from San Antonio;

Houston's Really Red, Culturcide, Judys, the Hates, DRI; Stickmen with Rayguns, Recipients, Non Compos Mentis, and the Telephones from Dallas; Austin's Big Boys, Dicks, Huns, Scratch Acid, Sharon Tate's Baby, and the Violators all made Texas one Kooky music box. Countless other bands in each city made up the huge statewide network of the Stooges-meets-Captain-Beefheart style of craziness. In the scale of absurdity, Texas ranks right up there at the top in the punk rock/new wave field of eye-popping rhythms.

Midnight runnin' on a bicycle with a spray can lookin' for trouble! If the fraternity/sorority BMW has a frat sign on the car window, it gets red spray-painted noodles down the side. I spray painted DEAD FRAT on a thirty square block area on all four street corners. More than once my knife blade has felt the death cold slide as it plunges deep into the sidewall of another Sigma Chi's Jeep tire. War takes on all forms. Sometimes the "knife" is a writing utensil and the damage inflicted can sometimes be in the mind. Some choose the physical destruction of mankind, some choose to further the mental breakdown of the man machines. The lotus rising teachings of Mao or the teachings of the wrapper of Fleer's Bubble Gum, it's all relevant to where you stand on the compass. If they say the pen is mightier than the sword, then the punk rocker and their fanzines were the Scud missiles and machine guns that fought back the cascade of normalcy. The local city newspaper would not know the joy experienced during a back flip at a Black Flag show or ever even know the awe or really ever "get it" at a Flaming Lips lunar adventure. The fanzine reported this and far beyond through first hand eyes. Fanzines only editors were the maker and the people who read them. Music and art were the beacon that drew us moths to the magazine flame. Write on.

OPPOSITE PAGE Big Boys shots from Duke's Royal Coach Inn/Rauls.





Biscuit and Gary Floyd in costume for Carnaval Brasaliero, 1981

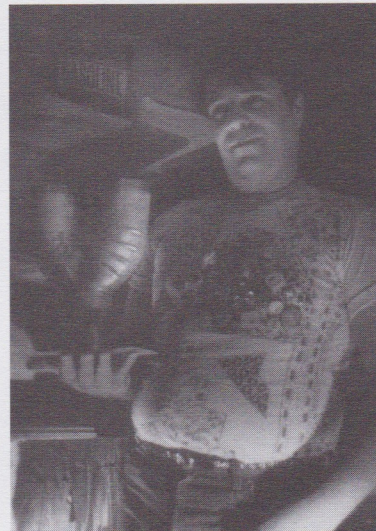


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In Los Angeles with red and yellow hair, 1983



Cargo Cult promo shot for Touch and Go records



Spring 2004



Part of Big Boys sponsored Texas Love In poster, 1982

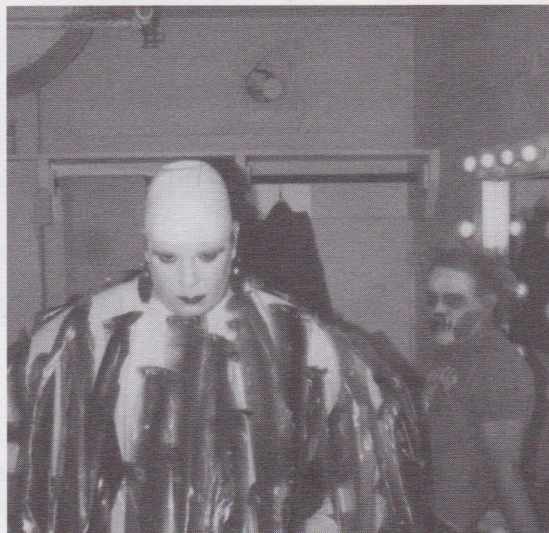
Big Boys snapshot from Rauls, September 1981



Big Boys at Voltaire's Basement in Austin, 1983



Biscuit and Tim Kerr at State Theatre show in Austin, 1983





Swine King promo photos for the Gargantuan Fantasy Mall CD



Dicks in the restroom at Raul's

Butthole Surfers

Fifth grade picture, Sugar Land, TX, 1959

Zorlac Skateboard ad from Thrasher 1981

Biscuit cleaning house in 1981

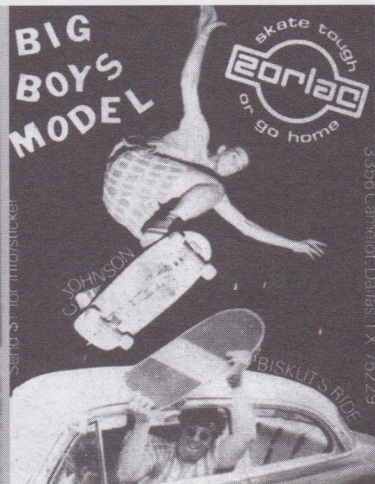
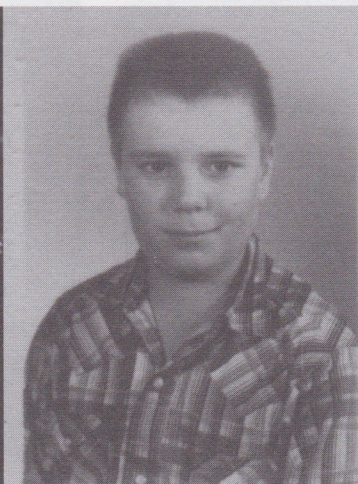




photo by XLR8 magazine

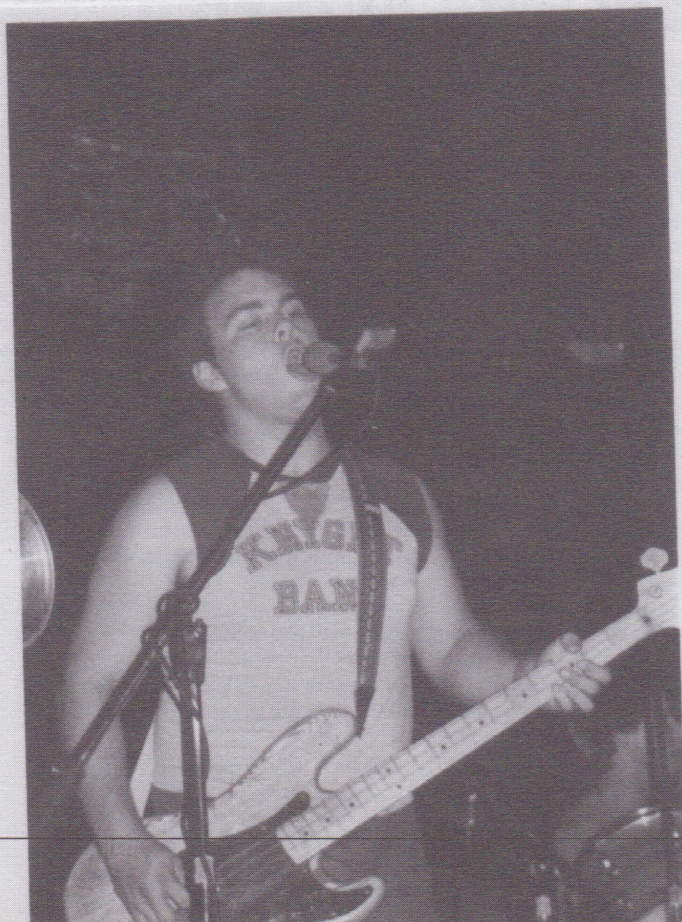
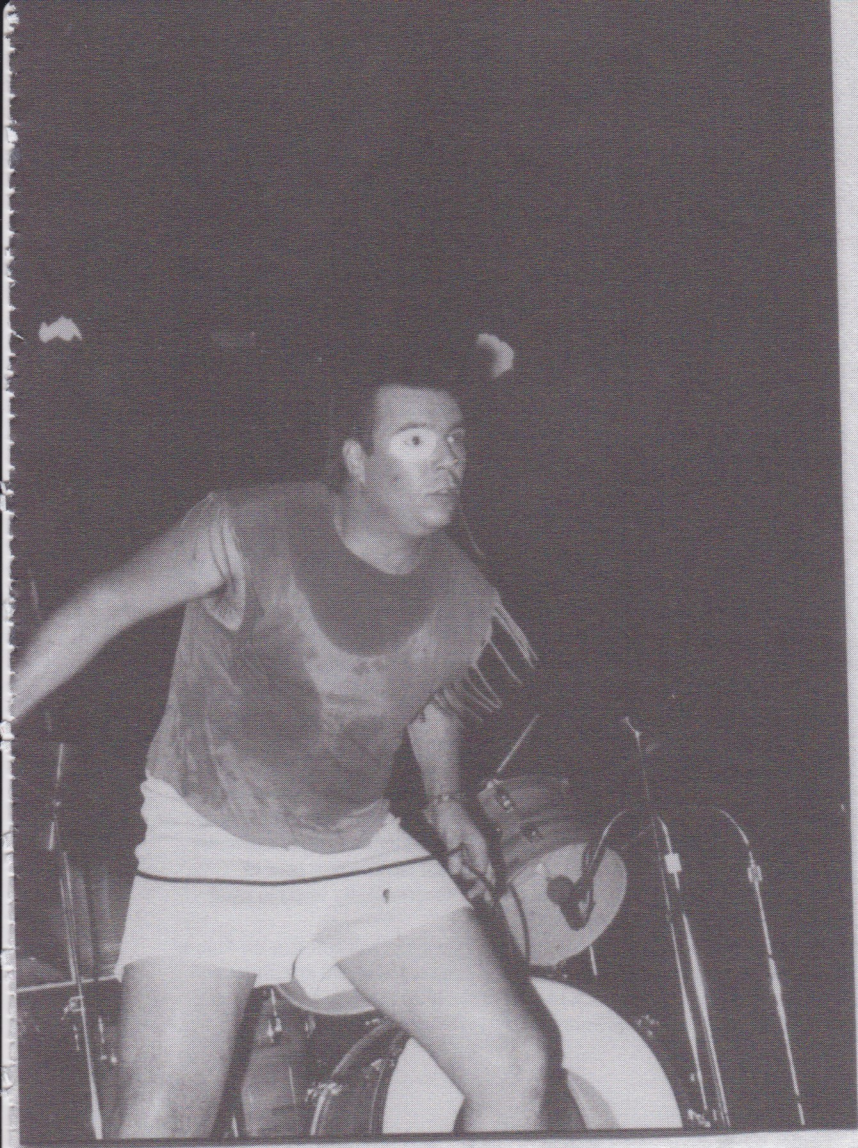
OPPOSITE PAGE
Big Boys at Dukes Royal
Coach Inn, Austin, 1980



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Spring 2004





are pushing for, again, we will not tell anyone who to vote for...Personally, right now I like Denis Kucinich a Democrat, last election I liked Nader a Green...I do not see voting for a candidate you believe in throwing away a vote...So, we just try to have people who like Anti-Flag become exposed to the fact that you should as a citizen vote, and above that make an educated vote...

As I understood, your hatred of the flag comes from the concept that nationalism is like the Real McKenzies (Scottish), or the Dropkick Murphys (Irish), or we could also inherently evil. However, there are punk bands, who emphasize their national identities, mention the palette of nations if the far-left vision of No Borders. No Nations. No Flags. No Patriots political metal band System of a Down (Armenian) here. Wouldn't you miss this colorful that you advocate would come true?

No, because that song is about embracing cultures and not being separated by flags and imaginary country lines...

You are frequently mentioned together with your labelmates Propagandhi because of your very similar political views (eg. they also talked about COINTELPRO on Today's Empires...), and I was surprised to see that there is no link to Propagandhi's website from yours, it's like a missing link in the underground network. Is there a kind of rivalry or dissent between Anti-Flag and Propagandhi?

Actually no, the bands on our site are all bands we've toured with. I guess we've just overlooked them...I am a huge Propagandhi fan, and there is no animosity between our bands from this end...

The sidenotes for You Can Kill the Protester But You Can't Kill the Protest mention the martyrs of the anti-globalization movement. You encourage kids to take part in these protests, but because of the heterogeneity of the anti-globalization movement, these protests often involve extremist groups, whose violent protest tactics are also factors that lead to tragedies. Don't you feel it would be your responsibility to state what forms of protest you recommend?

Well, anyone who is into the band and read the lyrics will know that the four of us stand behind peaceful protest, however I can see how civil extremism and violence can create an urgency, like in Seattle. If the violence were not there the WTO movement would not have gotten the media attention it got...

Roving the Political Terrain with Anti-Flag

By Balazs Sarkadi

A number of different groups share your views about the problems mentioned in your songs (American foreign policy, WTO etc.), but these groups differ radically in their visions about what kind of a system they would prefer after the present domination of corporations would be done away with. The web-links you are recommending are mostly affiliated with the radical Left, and I felt it was misleading to present their vision as the only possible alternative. David C. Korten, the author of *When Corporations Rule the World* (see www.davidkorten.org) suggests a true market economy model, which I find much more realistic than far left ideas which led to disasters in several countries in the 20th Century. Why is Korten (an expert of economy) ignored by all political punk bands, and why do they think Chomsky (a linguist) is competent to deal with world economy?

Well, I think that it's unfortunate you felt we were leading in one way over another...We are not the end all be all...What we're trying to do is have people think of options then they do research and decide for themselves what is right...So, to say we overlook Korten I would say is not true...He may not have been mentioned, but that does not mean he does not exist to us...

There's a flyer in *The Terror State's* artwork showing Bush as "One-term president." It's not clear for me who do you want your fans to campaign for, for the Democrats (like Fat Mike with punkvoter.com) or the Green Party, who have realistically no chance to win. Have you changed your earlier view that choosing between the Republicans and Democrats is like choosing between Pepsi and Coke?

Well, we said before Bush and Gore are like Coke and Pepsi, as for who we

Was it a surprise for you that the Dropkick Murphys also used a Woody Guthrie poem (Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight) on their recently released *Record*?

Well, I actually didn't know about that till after we had our song...and I think the genius of Woody needs to be spread everywhere, and think more of his poems and art needs to be seen and heard from everywhere...

I have the impression that Justin is quite an unlucky person. I've read that he is allergic on various things, including smoke, which have probably made touring really tough for the band, and then on top of it all he broke his jaw onstage in Birmingham in August due to a weird accident. How did it happen, and have you ever thought that there can be Bad Karma following him around?

No bad karma here...just a standard accident. The stage was black and the was a gap on the side he could not see. He fell into the the gap and hit his jaw on the PA speaker cabinet...As for his health, he is getting better all the time, though his allergies can make it tough.

Chris said in an interview once that people don't like Anti-Flag in Pittsburgh. What can be the reason for that?

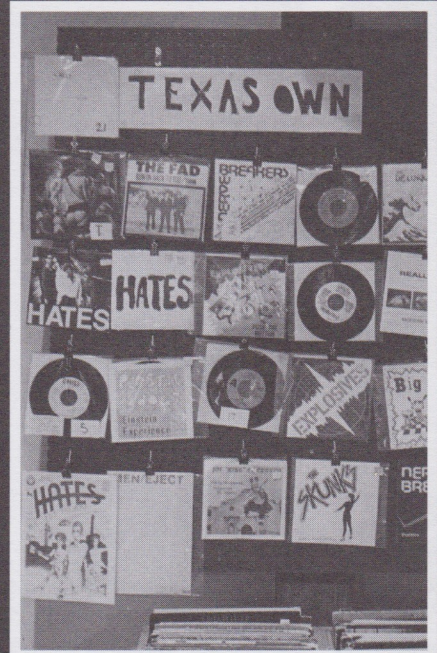
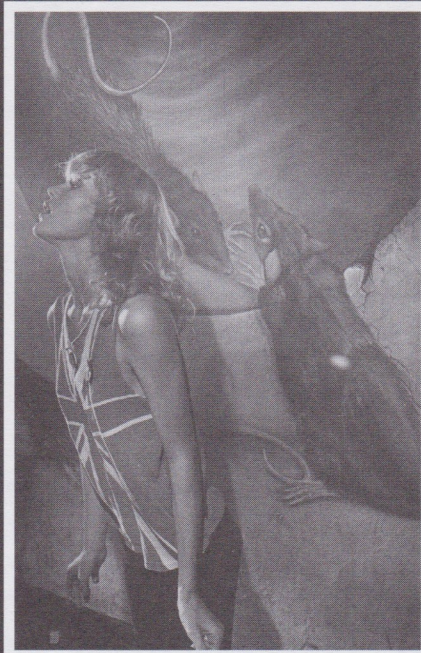
Well, I don't know what exactly I said, but what I'm sure I meant was, we do no better in Pittsburgh than anywhere else...It's not like hometown shows are huge compared to anytown, anywhere...

A Photo Cradle The Ben DeSoto Image Archive

Ben led me down a dank, shiver-inducing, makeshift sheetrock hallway at a wellworn factory building turned art co-op that made me feel deep deja for the helter skelter of Williamsburg, NYC (spice factories, Chinese meat distributors, waste treatment plants, dusty Polish and Puerto Rican bodegas). Pulling on one, dangling, noir-like bulb, light splashed across dented boxes, tilting file cabinets, and piles of magazines fanning out from the corners. Part of me numbly kept saying, "Don't expect much, it's not like you haven't seen stuff like this before." I knew that Ben had worked for the Houston Post as a young guy, spending weekends in Austin hanging out with bands like the Big Boys, and that he had carved a career for himself at the Houston Chronicle, but as soon as the manila envelopes started loosening up, I was flabbergasted, antsy, and totally immersed. Although Ben had put on some terrific gallery shows years ago, replete with graffiti and street scene backdrops, these photos had remained in the

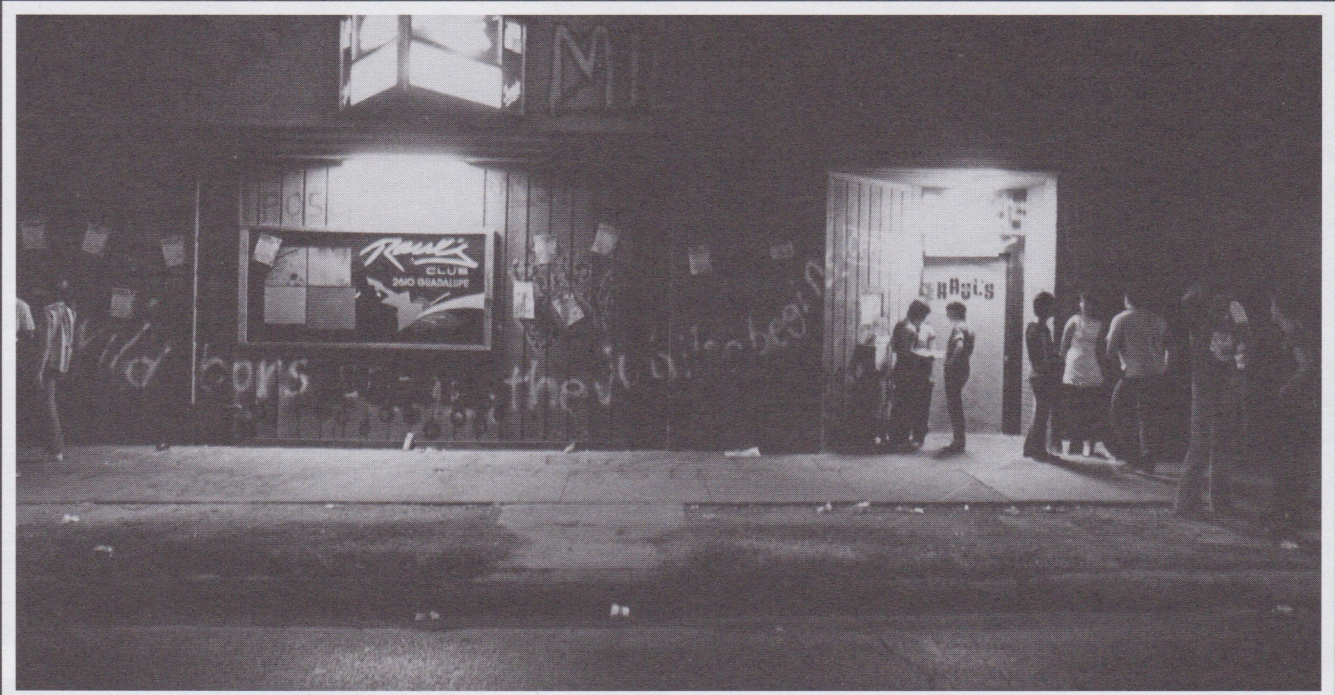
jittery metal cabinet for years, hinting of a heyday of dripping drugs, late night photography assignments now blurry and gelled together in memory, and backstage ramblings in long ago bulldozed or facelifted clubs.

To be able to print some of the greatest, sharpest, most evocative photos of this period, a time when the music industry was worried about the so-called harmful activities of homegrown cassette pirates and bootleggers, when kids weren't selling kids at the Hot Topic in every well-lit neighborhood mall, and MTV was far less juvenile and jack-ass and more novel and cutting edge, means I can cradle these photos into the future, just like you. They speak for themselves, but I'll let you decide what they say. Just thank your lucky, dirty, punk rock stars that Ben didn't ask the trash man to haul away part of our shared history. And thanks Ben, for the true grit.



All photos on this page: Austin in the early 1980s.

Below: Rauls, Austin









Lords of the New Church in Austin, early 1980s



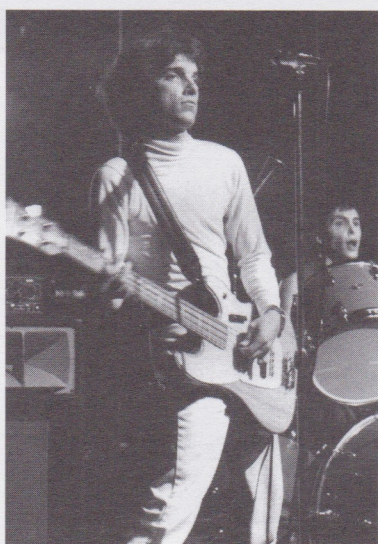
Butthole Surfers in Houston, early 1980s



Really Red in Houston, early 1980s



My Dolls in Houston, early 1980s



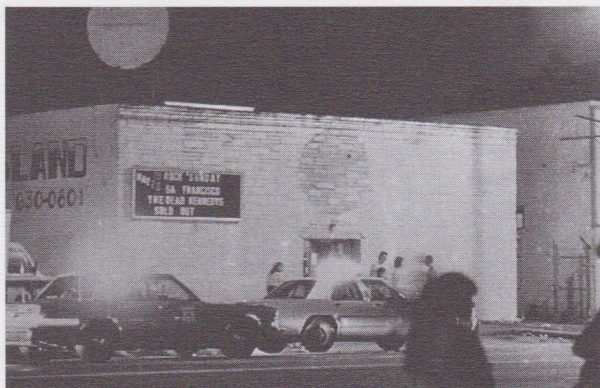
Hates in Houston, early 1980s



My Dolls in Houston, early 1980s



Big Boys in Houston, early 1980s



Outside the DK show in Houston, early 1980s



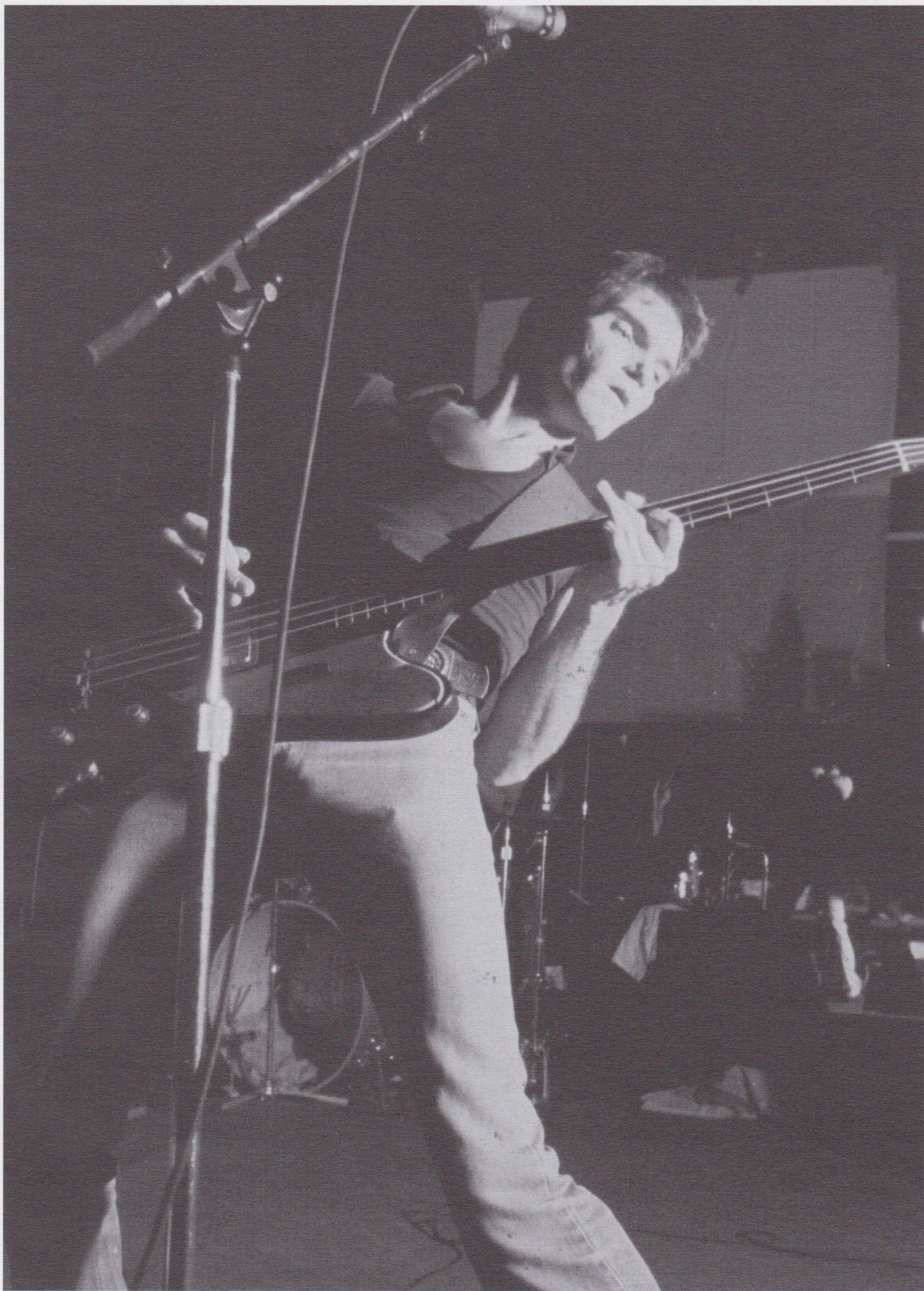
Dead Kennedys in Houston, early 1980s



Stickmen with Rayguns in Houston, early 1980s



Stickmen with Rayguns in Houston, early 1980s



Really Red in Houston, early 1980s



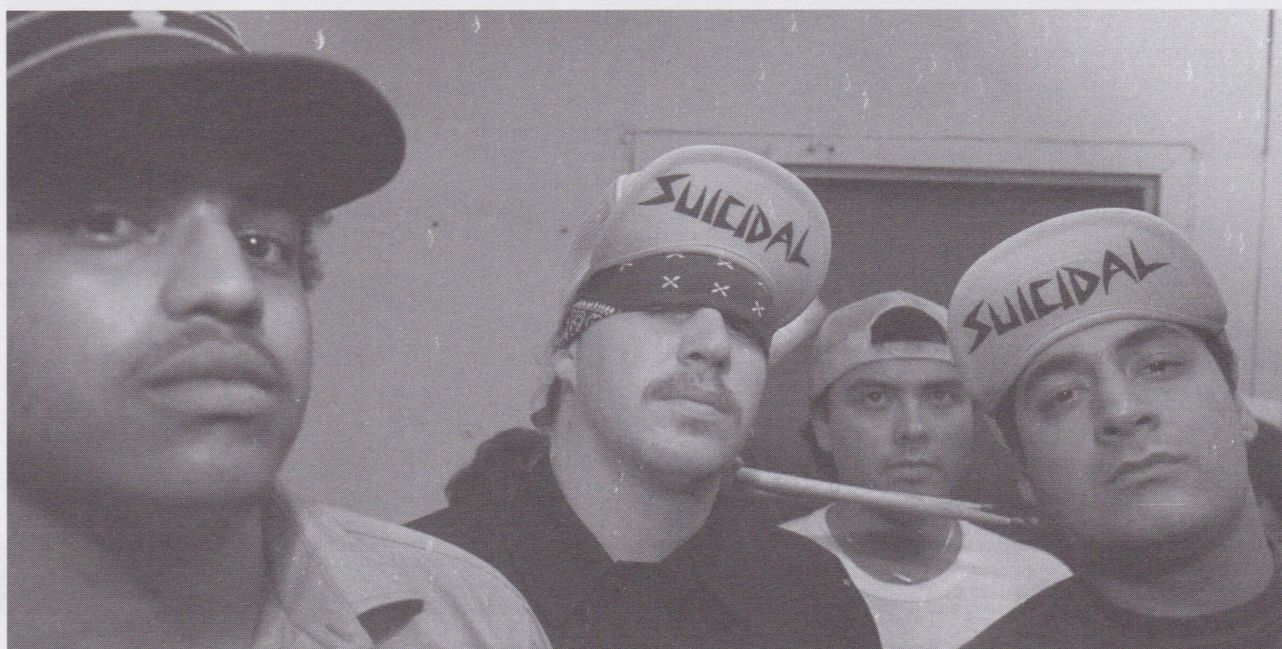
Joey Ramone, mid 1980s



DeeDee Ramone, mid 1980s

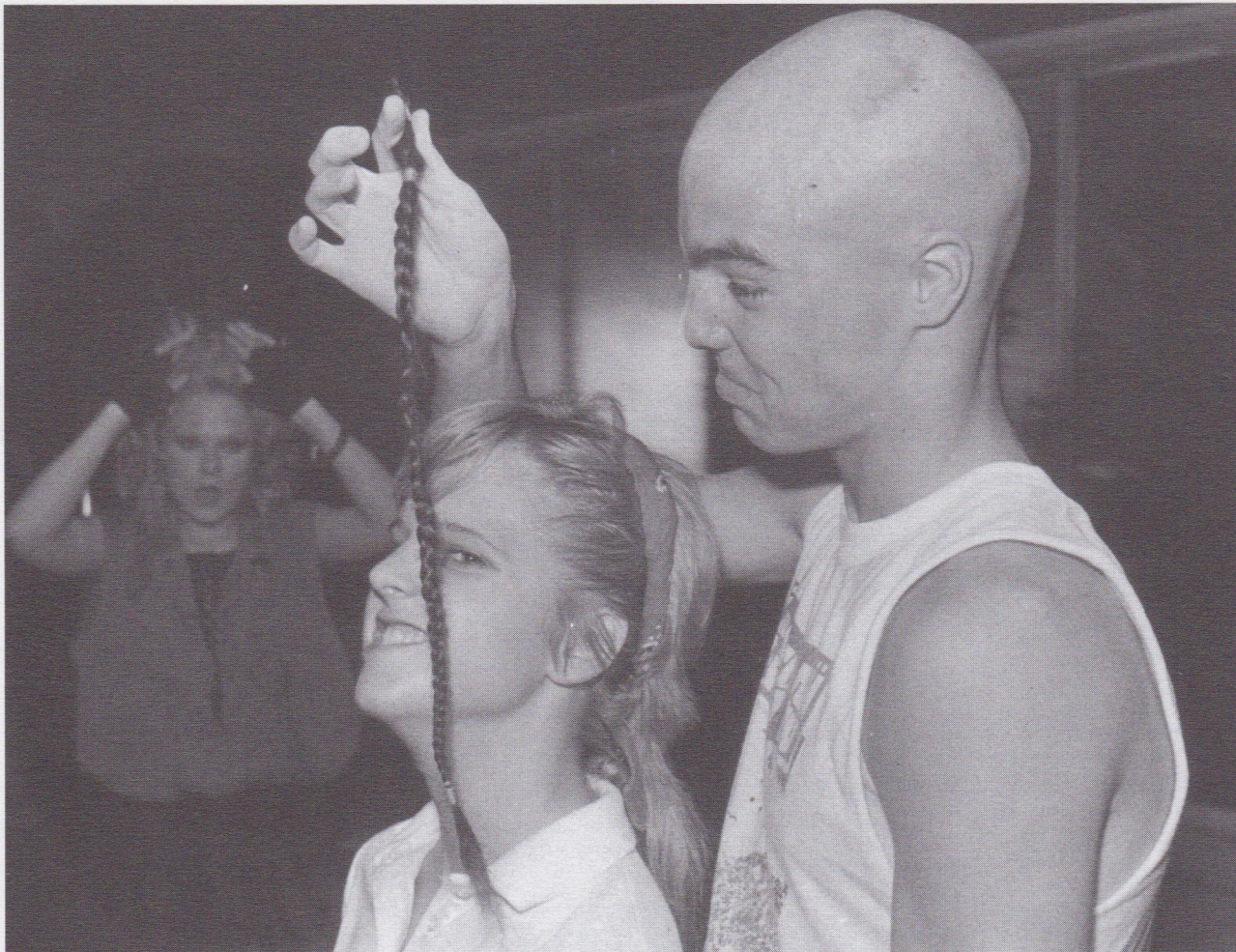


The Ramones, mid 1980s



Above and Below: Suicidal Tendencies, mid 1980s

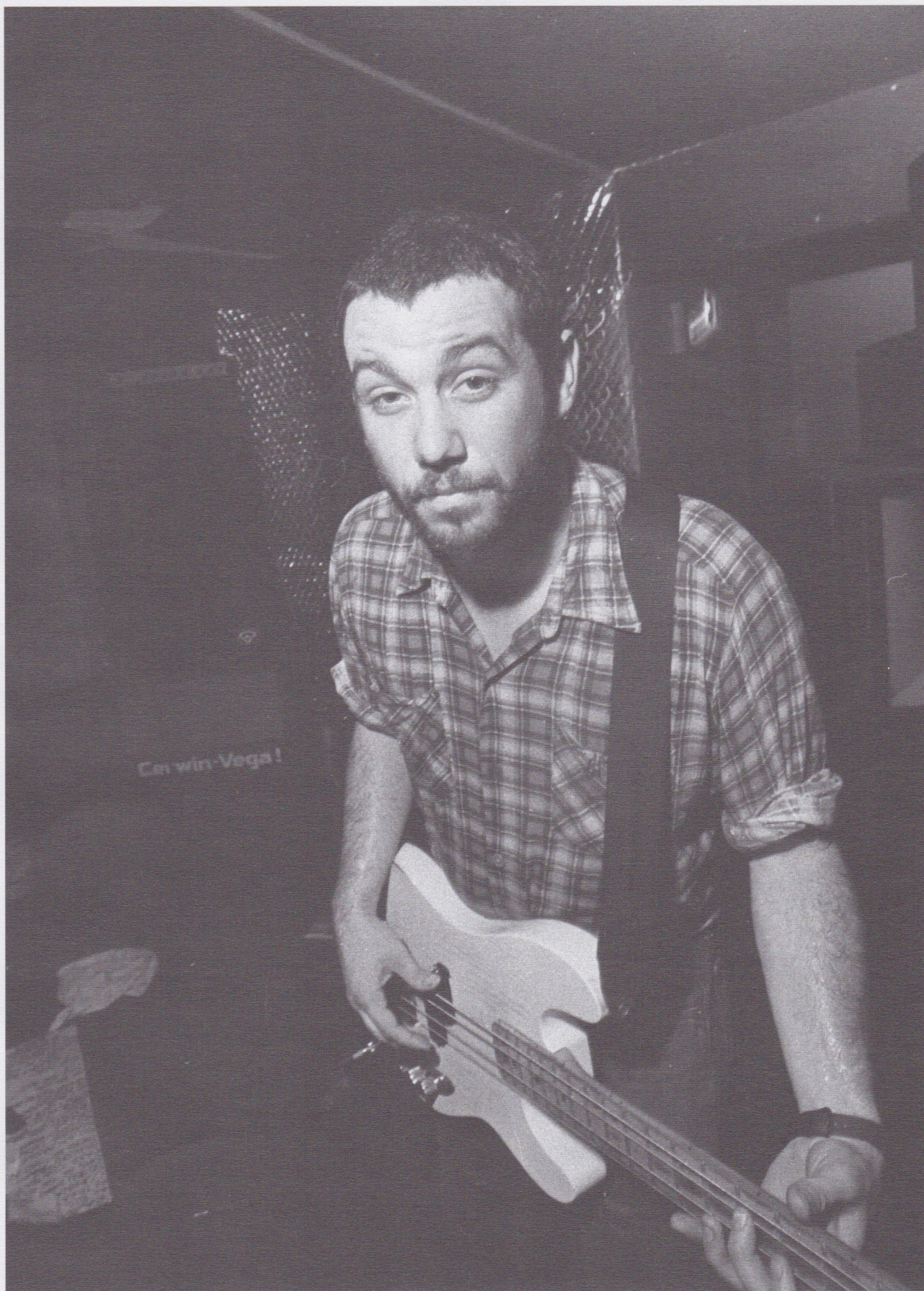




Punks with Braids, mid 1980s



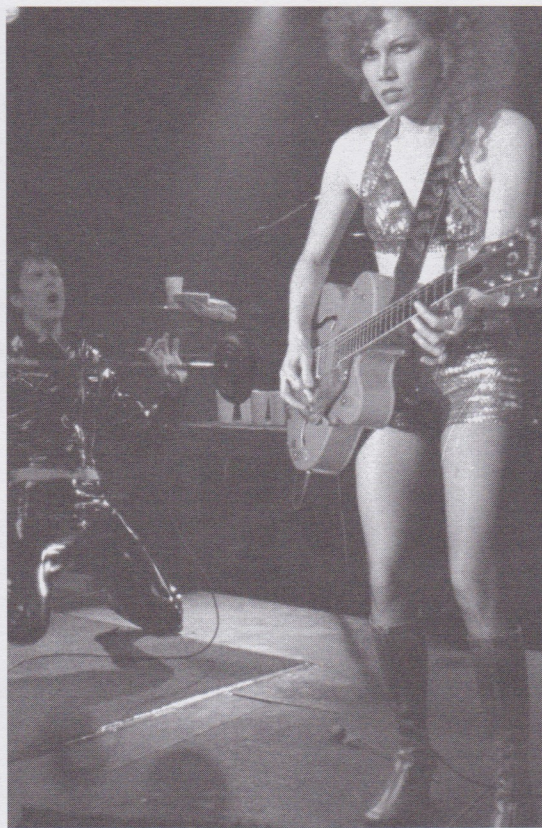
The Minutemen, mid 1980s



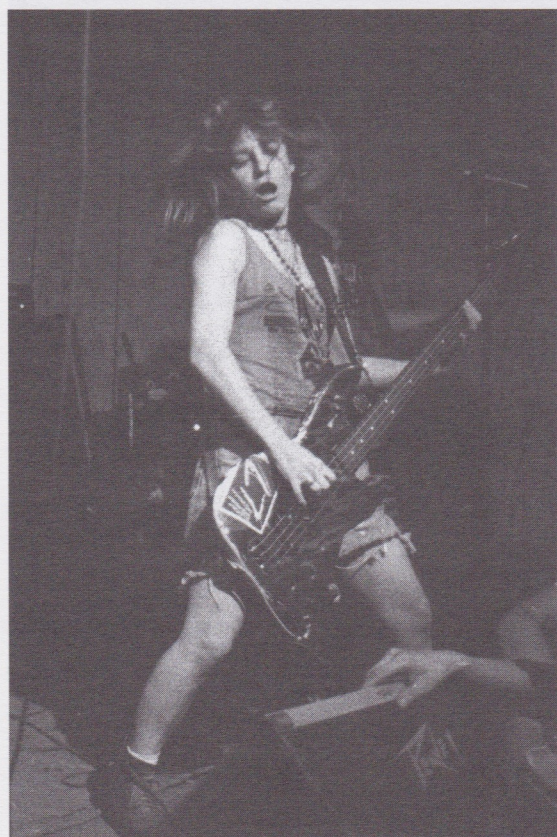
Mike Watt, mid 1980s



Lux from the Cramps, mid 1980s



Ivy from the Cramps, mid 1980s



L7, mid 1980s



The Circle Jerks, mid 1980s



Keith Morris, The Circle Jerks, mid 1980s



The Butthole Surfers, mid 1980s



The Butthole Surfers, mid 1980s



Black Flag show, mid 1980s



Black Flag, mid 1980s

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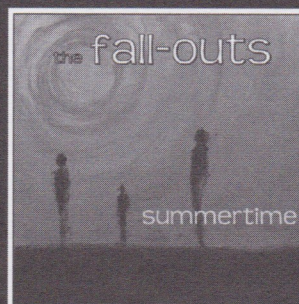
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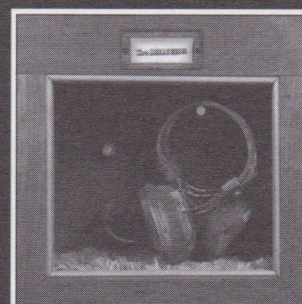
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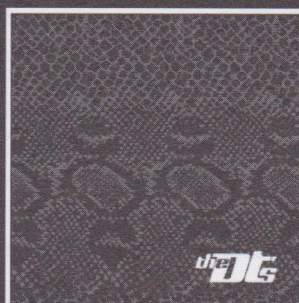
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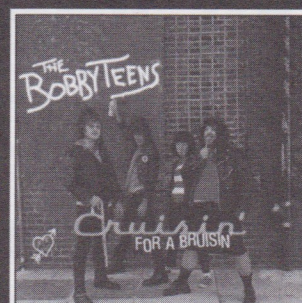
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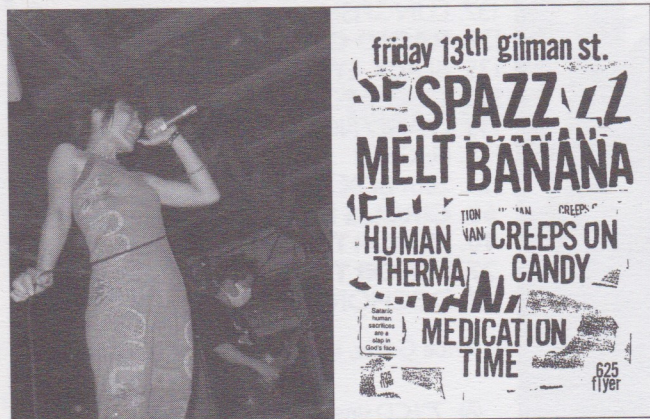
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Hardcore is Like a Second Skin The Art of Noise

Short Cuts with Melt Banana's Yasuko O

By Bethany Reed



How, when, and why did you first get into noise, punk rock and/or hard core music? What bands inspired you to start Melt Banana?

When I entered a university, I felt like I wanted to do something that could express myself. So I started the band first and about 4 years later, the band became MELT-BANANA. I chose music because music was close to me, and it was natural to start music for me. At first, my band sounded much more like punk music, or alternative music. And when I listened to the compilation album *No New York*, I was very shocked. This compilation contains Contortions, DNA, teenage Jesus and the jerks, and Mars, and it is kind of old album, but they sounded fresh and new and very unique I felt. And I started thinking more deeply about what I wanted to do or express or, you know. Then I tried to find our own sound with the members of my band. In Tokyo, we played with many noise bands, and also punk/hard core/fast core/grind core bands since those noise scene and punk/hard core scene are close and mixed in Tokyo. We get many influences from the bands with which we play. These days I listen to hip-hop music, or R&B, too.

So, you first formed Mizo in 1991. How and why did you end that and pick up with Melt Banana? Also, in what ways, if any, do the two bands differ?

Actually, I don't like talking about the old band. . . . It sounded more like punk music.

What role does rock music play in Japan? Is music at all regulated by the government there, or is there a lot of freedom for musicians to do what they want?

I think Japan is a pretty free country for music, because Japanese government doesn't see rock music as a culture. In Japan, there are many kinds of so-called traditional cultures, like Kabuki, or Nou, or those very old things. So I have not felt any problem with the government doing rock band in Japan. What is more troublesome in Japan is that the main stream music is very strong and also very bad. Of course there are good bands in the Japanese mainstream, but still there is too much boring music. It's called J-pop.

How did you come to work with Steve Albini and what influenced the decision for Melt Banana to be written and sung in English and recorded in the States?

Well, we like Big Black a lot! And our first album *Speak Squeak Creak* was originally released from a label called NUX, and it is a label of a Japanese guy K.K.NULL of Zeni Geva. He is a good friend of Steve, and his band Zeni Geva has worked with Steve several times and also they played with him and Shellac when they toured in Japan. When Steve was in Japan, Null brought him to our show telling him he would release our album. Then Steve asked NULL if we wanted to record with him; then Null asked us if we wanted to record with Steve at his home studio, and we said "YES!" And it happened. We were very happy! Yes, my lyrics are all in English and I am singing in English. To tell the truth, when I first started singing, I was singing in Japanese, but I noticed that English would fit more to my singing style. So, I just picked English. If I change my singing style, and if Italian

will fit, I will start singing in Italian. Or, maybe someday I will start singing in Japanese again.

Your lyrics seem to be a bit obscure, are there any common themes in the content of your lyrics? Many punk and hard core bands talk about social or political things but you chose not to focus on that. . . . Why not?

As you say, my lyrics are kind of obscure. So, it depends on the person who reads the lyrics if he or she will see any meaning or nothing. For me, each lyric has each meaning and maybe theme, but actually analyzing is not my job, you know.

How do you come up with the lyrics for your songs? Describe the process.

I read the [English] dictionaries, and pick up a word that has interesting pronunciation or meaning then starting with a word, I make up a story. It is fun.

How do your fans react in each of the countries you've performed in? Is there a difference at all?

It depends on what kind of show we play at. When we play at a kind of punk club with punk bands, the audience moshes and dives etc., etc. And when we play with noise bands or avant-garde bands, the audience is more like listening standing still. In Japan, the punk scene is active now, so there are many punk kids, and they go crazy at punk shows. One thing that I notice about European audiences is that they sing original songs at our show. Like, before starting our show and after finishing show, they sometimes start singing their own songs, like "MELT-BANANA . . . MELT-BANANA . . . MELT-BANANA," like encoring. And one thing that I notice about the U.S. is that audiences talk a lot. I guess their voices are loud. They talk to us during the show a lot.

What types of bands are hot in Japan right now?

Mainstream hip-hop. There are many good hip-hop [groups] right now . . . and the independent scene, hardcore, and fastcore scene.

It seems as though there has been a lot of press lately in the U.S. about Melt Banana for Teeny Shiny. Have you noticed a difference in your success or an increase in your international fan base with this last album, or has anything changed at all?

We cannot usually see magazines or fanzines from the U.S. or in other countries since we live in Japan, so we are not sure much. But these days when we play shows in U.S., we see many girls come to see our shows, more than before. So, I think that we are getting a little different audience these days. It is cool to see many girls show up to our show!

How would you say that Japan reacted towards the events of September 11, 2001 in N.Y.? Did it change anything in Japan? What were people saying about it and the war in Iraq, and how do you feel personally about it?

I think 9/11 gave Japanese people some change. But I personally think that the war is not the solution of 9/11. It just makes more hatred and sadness.

Also, for those of us who don't know. . . . What type of government does Japan have and what type of economy? Do you feel like Japan's system of government is working? Why or why not? What are the good and/or bad things about it?

Japanese government is democratic. I don't like the Japanese government because they are always obscure and waste too much money and they make too much debt. Maybe because of our long history, including Edo era, war, etc., there is a twisted part in Japan, I guess.

What is one thing about the world or your life that makes you really sad?
Wasabi.

What is one thing about the world or your life that makes you really happy?

My puffer fish. I have a puffer fish in my tank at home. He is so cute!

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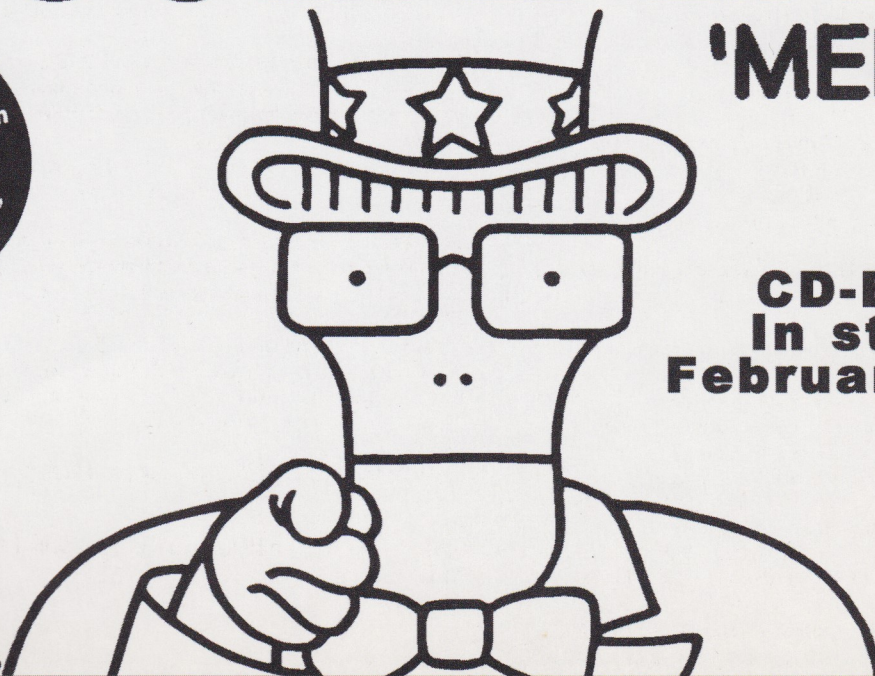
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